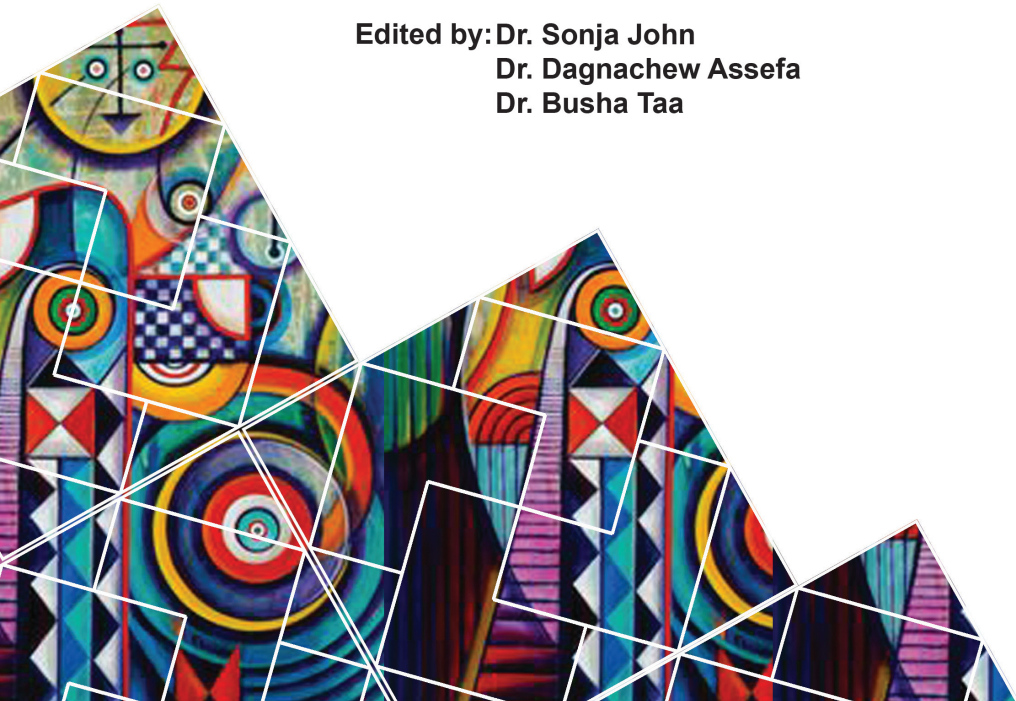




# **CULTURES OF DEMOCRACY IN ETHIOPIA**

**FROM THEORY TO  
LIVED EXPERIENCES**

**Edited by: Dr. Sonja John  
Dr. Dagnachew Assefa  
Dr. Busha Taa**





## **Cultures of Democracy in Ethiopia**

### **- From Theory to Lived Experiences**

This conference volume is a collection of papers that were presented at the conference “Cultures of Democracy in Ethiopia” that was held in Gondar in April 2017. The spirit and tenor of the essays assembled within this publication focus on the cultural metrics that underlie the diverse cultures and meanings of democracy. The issues addressed in this book involve topics ranging from dialogue, communication, democratization, vulnerable subjects, liberation, self-governing, indigenous concepts, public reasoning, intra-party democracy, conflict resolution and secession up to including the question of the potential of media and music to act in processes of democratization. What they have in common is a call for a better understanding of democracy, for practicing democracy, and thus for eventually developing cultures of democracy. This book is the result of those deliberations. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Gondar University are convinced that this research on cultures of democracy depicts an enriching and unique perspective on democratization in Ethiopia.

## Editors

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**Dr. Dagnachew Assefa** Desta received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Boston College. He taught Philosophy at Suffolk University (Boston) and Addis Abeba University. He has published numerous articles on philosophy, politics, and aesthetics, both in English and Amharic. Currently he is working on a book on Ethiopian old and new educational system beginning from the early 20th century up to now.

**Dr. Busha Taa** obtained his BA in Political Science from York University and MA in Political Sociology from Western University, Canada. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Toronto, Canada. Dr. Busha has extensive experience in teaching and research from various Canadian universities, including University of Toronto, Ryerson University, University of Guelph, Brock University, and Wilfrid Laurier University. He has managed various research projects at the University of Toronto and Ryerson University. Dr. Busha has published various articles on peer reviewed journals and academic books. At present, Dr. Busha is an associate professor of Sociology at the University of Gondar. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of the *Renaissance Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, hosted by the University of Gondar.

# **Cultures of Democracy in Ethiopia**

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Dr. Sonja John

Dr. Dagnachew Assefa

Dr. Busha Taa

A publication of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Ethiopia

## **Imprint**

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Printed in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

First Printing, 2017

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Queen Elizabeth II Street

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<https://www.fes-ethiopia.org>







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## Foreword I

Ethiopia is one of the world's richest countries in terms of civilization, history and culture. This wealth includes democratic traditions that date back to time immemorial. The basic democratic principles of self-government, equality, representation, voice, open debate and consensus, as well as participation in agenda setting and decision making have long since been practiced as traditional cultures at local level in various aspects of Ethiopian societies. Most traditional institutions of Ethiopia embrace fundamental democratic values such as rule of law, principles of single term office and principles of impeachment of leaders amongst others. Incorporating these principles into modern day Ethiopian context is an ongoing process.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a German political foundation which was established in 1925 as a political legacy of Germany's first democratically elected president, Friedrich Ebert. Among its objectives, the goal of FES is to contribute to international understanding and cooperation and to foster dialogues on social democracy worldwide.

Since 1992, FES has established close partnerships to support the Ethiopian democratization processes. Its principal areas of activity are; facilitating policy dialogues on important political issues for the country's present and future, providing capacity building for various actors of the Ethiopian society and leadership development to prepare the next generation of Ethiopian decision-makers.

The articles compiled in this publication reveal that in Ethiopia, there is more than one understanding of democracy or democratic cultures instead of one single (western-oriented) form of democracy. To analyze their conceptualizations, was the main objective of a conference organized in April 2017. This publication "Cultures of Democracy in Ethiopia" is a summary of the respective discussions.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is convinced that this research on cultures of democracy depicts an enriching and unique perspective on democratization in Ethiopia. It is our sincere belief that policy makers as well as practitioners will find useful knowledge and suggestions within this impressive edition. It can therefore serve to identify pathways to cope with ongoing challenges for peace, development and social cohesion in Ethiopia. FES expresses its profound gratitude to the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies of Gondar University, the inspiring paper presenters and, of course, the editors of this endeavor for ensuring excellent collaboration all along the path to publication.

*Constantin Grund*

Resident Representative

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

## Foreword II

Dear Readers, allow me to warmly welcome you to the reading of this book. The word democracy comes from a Greek word which means the rule of law. Nowadays, democracy is believed to be the best way of governing societies as it gives an opportunity for all to exercise the rule of law, justice, freedom and fundamental human rights. In many circumstances, democratic culture is not being practiced as expected because of prevailing challenges. The fight against lack of democracy and good governance has now become not only the concern of a single country but also an international concern and a number of initiatives have been taken both at global and national levels to improve the culture of democracy. To build a democratic culture, people must have equal rights irrespective of their gender, religion, ethnicity and origin and many strategies to fulfill these objectives have been fashioned to achieve the desired social transformations. One of these strategies is organizing conferences such as the one which took place in Gondar. The students and young colleagues are the drivers and implementers of the reform and development agenda of society and conferences will create networks among all the different actors.

It is a privilege for the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Gondar to host such a conference in collaboration with FES. I am sure that the conference has fostered mutually beneficial relationships and succeeded in creating networks amongst scholars, as well as at more individual levels to promote cultures of democracy. This book can be an additional way of strengthening these ties.

I would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Sonja John and Mr. Yared Debebe for their initiative in organizing this conference and other committee members for their hard work to realize this conference. I would also like to extend a special thank you to FES for their financial support and to the University of Gondar for its commitment to and support of the organizing of the conference. My special thanks also goes to Dr. Busha Taa and Dr. Dagnachew Assefa for committing to chairing the various sessions and for moderating the conference. Their well-informed questions and guiding of discussions were a major contribution in making this conference a success.

Finally, I want to thank the organizers for inviting me to make an opening speech at this conference. From the very outset, the program of the conference looked very exciting and I was sure that the conference would give all of us knowledge, insights and ideas to help improve our understanding on the culture of democracy. I am fully convinced that this conference has served its purpose on broadening our perspective on cultures of democracy.

*Kassahun Tegegne, Ph.D.*

Dean, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Gondar

## Introduction

*Dagnachew Assefa, Busha Taa and Sonja John*

The spirit and tenor of the essays assembled within this publication focus on the cultural metrics that underlie the different cultures and meanings of democracy. The central terms and categories that form the basis of analyzing cultures of democracy are utterly diverse and range from; dialogue, communication, democratization, vulnerable subjects, liberation, self-governing, Indigenous concepts, public reasoning, interparty democracy, conflict resolution and secession up to including the question of the potential of media and music to act in processes of democratization.

Since the title of the conference invokes the term culture, it is fitting at this juncture to say a few words about the phenomenon of cultures. We find a variety of definitions and approaches to the concept of culture. In support of this, the papers collected in this book reveal that there exists more than one approach to democracy. As Dr. Sonja John succinctly argues in her contributory article within this volume, instead of looking to the global, we should take a close look at democratic cultural practices at local levels. Furthermore, instead of concentrating on the West as a leitmotif for an ideal democratic state, we should redirect our attention to societies that actually have long-held experiences in democratic cultural practices. It is sure that there is no one solidified concept of culture but what we have instead is a more pluralist perception of culture that emanates from the different cultural practices of people and societies.

Nowadays, the concept of culture has assumed a very important place in both the study of humanities and social sciences. This point is underlined by the preminent cultural sociologist Christ Jenks (2001):

There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture. Men without culture would not be the clever savage of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* thrown back upon the cruel wisdom of their animal instincts; nor would they be nature's noble men of Enlightenment primitivism or even, as classical anthropological theory would imply, intrinsically talented apes who had some failed to find themselves. They would be unworkable monstrosities with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect, mental basket cases. (p. 6)

The concept of culture is derived philologically from agricultural practices emanating

from working on or cultivating the soil. It implies a transformation of one state of being to another such as, cultivating the mind, the person, undergoing educational processor transforming and/or cultivating political practices.

The concept of culture has evolved morphologically into a different set of ideas. Culture in this sense implies a state of mind; a properly nurtured and cultivated mind. A classic proponent of this perspective was Matthew Arnold (1932), who defined culture as “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world” (p. viii). Accordingly, for him, culture is the study of perfection par excellence. In Bonnell and Hunt’s volume titled *Beyond the cultural turn: New directions in the study of society and culture*, culture is defined as “the study of mentalities, ideology, symbols and rituals, and high and popular culture” (1999, p. ix).

The collected reflections presented in this book naturally gravitate towards the making of democratic practices and visions throughout Ethiopian cultural, political and educational fields. Hence, the majority of contributors examine the various dimensions democracies face from different perspectives.

We have divided this book into two parts: the first part deals with the theoretical framework on cultures of democracy. The second part deals with practical issues that emanate when implementing democracy. Particular emphasis is placed upon Ethiopian political and cultural practices throughout the text.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON CULTURES OF DEMOCRACY**

Dr. Magdalena Freudenschuss’ article centers on the question of the figure of political subjects. She begins by launching a formidable critique of the Western notion of political subject which emanated from the Enlightenment. She calls for an alternative view or perception of political subjects and agents. Her study presents a thoughtful and alternative perception about political subjects that resists the old ideas and hegemonic practices of powerful European countries. She has systematically and imaginatively mapped out how a democratic culture could be accommodative and beneficial to vulnerable subjects.

Dr. Sonja John sees democracy as all members of society practicing conversation and dialogue. Basing her argument on Amartya Sen’s *The idea of justice* (2009), she calls for a re-orientation of the dominant institutional perception of democracy to government by discussion. She locates democracy’s most essential foundation not in institutions but primarily in the promotion of open, all-inclusive, interactive discussions. By calling for ‘Indigenizing democracy’, she suggests that instead of turning to the West with its Westminster model and its rather young democratic

experience, Ethiopia could turn towards its own internal resources, traditional knowledge and cultures of democracy that have already been practiced for centuries.

Fasil Merawi telescoped modernity through the Ethiopian lens of inquiry and is highly critical of the way in which it was circumscribed to the centralization of power. He further contended that modernization cannot be realized without the inclusion of socio-cultural and economic aspects of the country to the process. In fleshing out his arguments, Fasil argues that the uniqueness of the non-colonized nation of Ethiopia defies all logics of modernization applied elsewhere. Through his analysis, he contests that modernization from above without popular participation fails, yielding to the current multiethnic identity-based intercultural model of democratization process.

### **POLITICAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES OF DEMOCRACY IN ETHIOPIA**

Teguada Alebachew's reflection is based on an examination and exploration of intra-party democracy in Ethiopia. The fundamental claim of her paper is based on the assumption that unless political parties develop democratic cultural practices within their structures, it would be very difficult for them to effectively enact government practices based on democratic values or to demand them from other actors of the political field. Without intra-party democracy, there cannot be a truly democratic government or political culture. Therefore, she insistently calls for the establishment of a legal regime to regulate intra-party democracy.

While most contributions in this volume view democratization processes as a state responsibility that has to be implemented from the top down, Nigisti Gebreslassie explains how the work of her Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) *Yenege Tesfa* engages in participatory democracy at the grassroots – or street roots – levels. In addition to providing homeless children and their families with homes and access to education, healthcare and job opportunities, the organization also encourages street children to discuss their situations, needs and prospects for a self-determined and brighter future.

Ebrahim Damtew presents an investigation into conflict resolution and peacemaking process led by Dubarti women from *Jamma woreda, South Wallo*. These local peace envoys lead conflicting parties through negotiation and mediation processes until they reach a compromise that satisfies the contending parties and the community at large. Ebrahim argues that these respected personas become involved in conflict resolution due to their traditional Dubarti knowledge and rituality with a sense of neutrality. Unlike the modern court that punishes the offender and rewards the victim, the decision by these revered women re-harmonizes the community, reconciles disputants,

compensates victims and reintegrates the offenders into communities.

Tewelde Gebremariam's interrogation into the concept of democratic developmental states raises profound questions about the distinction between democratic and non-democratic developmental states. His study is particularly focused on identifying the peculiar features of the Ethiopian state and tries to address whether it is democratic or rather authoritarian in nature.

Wuhibegezer Ferede's analysis on the question of nations and nationalities deals with the problem of integration and separation in the Horn of Africa. He believes that the integrative and disintegrative impulses, which are pulling the Horn states to and fro, have become a source of destabilization for the region. In recent times, Ethiopia has tried to cope with this problem by adopting semi-Marxist and ethno-nationalist measures. Even with the creation of ethnic-federalism, the issue of state legitimacy has not been resolved to the satisfaction of some nationality groups. Wuhibegezer warns of the destabilizing effects of quarrelling elites, competitive ethnicization in the country and how new secessionist states in the region could threaten Ethiopia's unity.

Yilkal Ayalew argues that civic and ethical education nurtures democratic cultures in citizens. He believes that civic culture and knowledge could create a viable political habitat for the growth and development of democracy. He finds civic skill, civic knowledge and civic disposition to be extremely important ingredients towards the attainment of democratic cultures. His study demonstrates some shortcomings within the civics education curricula developed by the federal ministry and thus recommends modifications.

Tezera Tazebew explores the internet's unique implication in the process of democratization. Depending on context, it has been praised by proponents and cursed by opponents. Tezera argues that the internet age has given rise to an explosion of information for Ethiopians. The coverage of internet in Ethiopia has risen from 2.9 % in 2014 to 12% in 2015. However, despite its colossal potential of information dissemination, it remains under the monopoly of the centralized government. In the case of Ethiopia, ongoing censorship disables the constitutionally granted right of freedom of expression.

Solomon Girma's essay on the interrelationship of music and democratization in Ethiopia also addresses the issue of censorship. He tries to demonstrate the existence of two antithetical songs; one celebrates the current political trends and the other condemns political practices of the current Ethiopian regime. He calls the two trends 'protest' and 'praise' songs. In conjunction with these contradictory tendencies, he finds freedom of speech immensely circumscribed both at home and abroad. Protest songs are encouraged and promoted by the Diaspora community, while praise songs

are championed here at home and listening to critical songs had been outlawed under 2016/2017 (GC) the state of emergency. Solomon explains how more tolerance and openness in regard to music could contribute to an open debate and to democratization.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Culture is a theory and a set of meanings, processes and practices that are both shared and contested. As a consequence, the perspectives, topics and suggestions expressed in this volume are diverse. The issues addressed in this book involve topics ranging from; dialogue, communication, democratization, vulnerable subjects, liberation, self-governing, indigenous concepts, public reasoning, interparty democracy, conflict resolution and secession up to including the question of the potential of media and music to act in processes of democratization.

What they have in common is a call for a better understanding of democracy, for practicing democracy and thus for eventually developing cultures of democracy. This book is the result of those deliberations.

Although we feel this issue is a valuable and important contribution to the literature on democracy theory and practice, it only represents a beginning in the debate of developing a culture of democracy. Rather than filling a gap in the literature in democracy study – a gap too large for any volume to fill – we hope that this book provides a platform for further study.

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## Democracy and Its Subjects – Rational, Autonomous, Stable?

Magdalena Freudenschuss<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Since the Enlightenment period, Europeans consider the political subject to be a rational and autonomous subject. European democracies built upon that tradition – a tradition which is undeniably linked to colonialism and the Othering of People of Colour and Indigenous People as well as of women. These processes of Othering consolidate the male, bourgeois subject as norm. Today, the construction of a legitimate political subject of democracy is at stake. Drawing on recent, empirical examples from media and activism, I will argue that political subjectivity in practice systematically opposes the idea of an autonomous and rational subject. On the contrary, political subjectivity in the context of grassroots politics as well as hegemonic institutions very often refers to emotions and relationality. I will put forth an alternative understanding of the political subject using affect theory and postcolonial theory as a critical theoretical framework. By underlining relationality as an affective as well as a historical and social matter, the paper focuses on current dynamics of constructing the political subject in Germany, especially with regard to debates on refugee and migration politics. Since 2015, these debates have turned into a core challenge to democratic values: Whose rights are acknowledged within the democratic framework? Whose political subjectivity is put up for discussion? Following these questions, I will retrace the current constructions of the political subject and put it into dialogue, incorporating both the above-mentioned prototype and alternative logics derived from postcolonial and affect theory.*

**Keywords:** Political subjectivity, vulnerability, relational subjectivity, refugee activism

### POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITY AND VULNERABILITY

2015 saw "the long summer of migration" – or at least it was the year 2015 when migration to Europe massively gained public attention. Taking the Balkan route way

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north, about half a million refugees reached Germany in 2015. Numbers differed a lot; one talked about a million people if not more. In the end, the registration system turned out to contain a lot of errors, for example registering people multiple times. Less than half a million-people filed for asylum during 2015, about 750.000 in 2016 with numbers decreasing since summer 2016 (BAMF, 2016). During the first months, the media coverage on the arrivals was mostly positive and documented the so-called culture of welcoming in Germany but skeptical and more negative voices eventually dominated. Also, the state's policies plugged into former repressive tendencies of keeping borders closed and people out. Since then, the number of deportations from Germany is constantly rising. The focus on the vulnerability of migrants shifted towards an assumed vulnerability of native Germans facing newcomers. This summer's (of 2015) events have broadly been considered a challenge to Europe's – and especially Germany's – capacities of welcoming and integrating refugees. Right extremist parties and political actors even read the comparatively high numbers of newcomers as a threat to the country's (or rather nation's) identity. Contrary to these views, I want to put forward a learning and listening perspective. If we assume a crisis is looming for European democracies and its subjects, the refugee movements – both in the sense of their moving to Europe as well as their political engagements – provide opportunities for an alternative understanding of the figure of the political subject.

In this sense, this contribution does not aim at a systematic analysis of refugee movements but takes their positions, arguments and actions as something to learn from. The methodological approach is thus a tentative one, assuming that theory or impulses for theory are not exclusively a domain of researchers, but that social analysis and critique is strongly held up by civil society agents as well, though the format might differ from scientific standards. Moreover, for me, positioned in one of the richest countries of the Global North, namely Germany, with a number of privileges in society due to my professional formation, a white person and as a European Citizen, listening to marginalized societal positions and learning from them also forms a political demand of its own.

Such fragments from activist positions might fuel the political as well as scientific debate on the figure of a relational, affective and vulnerable political subject. Why such a shift in the understanding of the political subject of democracy is of eminent importance in the face of crisis, I will try to explain as a first step. Further on, in the second part of this chapter, I lay out three possible aspects for learning from refugee movements. There, I consider the vulnerable subject in terms of relationality, historicity and network society. In conclusion, I point to different moments of re-shaping a critical understanding of political subjectivity in times of a multiple crisis of democracy, also based in the Global North.

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### **TURNING TOWARDS A VULNERABLE SUBJECT**

Hegemonic politics still broadly refer to the political figure of the autonomous subject. Since the Enlightenment period, Europeans consider the political subject to be a rational and autonomous subject. European democracies continuously build on that tradition – a tradition which is undeniably linked to colonialism and the Othering of People of Colour and Indigenous People as well as of women. European Enlightenment's thoughts are traced back to the French Revolution while ignoring the Haitian Revolution with its questioning and overcoming of enslavement. The European story of democracy and its subjects held and still holds on to a history of discrimination (Ziai, 2016, p. 13). These processes of Othering consolidate the male, bourgeois subject as norm. The construction of the legitimate political subject of democracy is a continuous case of political negotiations as the recent debates on migration in Germany have illustrated.

In today's politics, the figure of the autonomous political subject is backed up by and profoundly linked to politics of immunization and securitization (Lorey, 2011). Vulnerability, there, is primarily if not exclusively considered a default. It is vastly understood as the other of security and thus adds to binary constructions as rational versus emotional, autonomous versus dependent, male versus female and culture versus nature which form the foundation of many of democracy's logics and mechanisms. Structures of domination like racism and patriarchy also draw on these binaries. Gaining control over potential vulnerabilities has drawn progressively less attention within the political discourse of terrorism and counter-terrorism since 2001. Such logics are additionally fueled by cybernetics, but also substantially by capitalism: "Capitalism seeks to gain power by controlling and neutralizing the maximum possible number of subjectivity's existential refrains; capitalistic subjectivity is intoxicated with and anaesthetized by a collective sense of pseudo-eternity" (Guattari, 1989, p. 139). Gaining control thus also implies control over temporality: eternity can be understood as clearly opposing logic to vulnerability. The vulnerable is temporal, it speaks of dependency, relationality and limits. In this respect, societies of control (Deleuze, 1990) cultivate a form of subjectivity linked to hegemonic modes of masculinity and especially to the figure of the modern, autonomous subject, developing it along the idea of immunity. It is exactly this autonomous subject which claims to make itself

invincible, liberated from all forms of vulnerability. Risks and threats are sought to be prevented before they even turn up. A control society relies on calculating possible risks, on identifying potential perpetrators and on eliminating these maybes before they turn into actual threats. Security, thus, is one of the key terms of societies of control. Today's policies of border control and migration regimes seem to defend this very idea of the subject and of its vulnerability.

Contrary to this, highlighting vulnerability means highlighting relationality and reciprocity. Reciprocity in social and political relations allows for constructing 'the only world we have' (Mbembe, 2014, p. 331) as a just world. Achille Mbembe links his claim for a just world with the idea that we all have a constitutive part in the existence of others and that we cannot seize parts of the other without affecting the idea of the self, justice, law or humanity as such. Mbembe argues for a mode of sociality which he calls 'living in the open' where caring for the open is a central issue (Mbembe, 2014, p. 331). Such a perspective is of eminent importance to the future of democracy itself. Feminist media scholar Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2006) links democracy to vulnerability – and thus challenges politics of restrictive regulations and enclosure. She puts emphasis on:

[...] the necessity to deal with questions of democracy in terms of vulnerability and fear. Resisting this vulnerability leads to the twinning of control and freedom -a twinning that depends on the conflation of information with knowledge and democracy with security. (Chun, 2006, p. 127)

Considering, including, even embracing vulnerability might thus be a necessary step in order to counter the questionable turn of democracy towards securitization and control instead of participation and freedom. One (possible) layer to reflect upon such an alternative way of dealing with vulnerability touches upon the figure of the political subject. Highlighting vulnerability is not something which envisages inventing a new concept. In feminist and postcolonial theories, vulnerability has a long history of being dealt with – theoretically as much as on activist grounds (Freudenschuss, 2017). Rosine Kelz (2015), for example, discusses such a perspective in reference to Emmanuel Levinas, Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida. Drawing on these authors and their conceptions of a relational and vulnerable form of subjectivity, she argues for a respective policy of migration. From her perspective, migrant subjects offer an alternative way of thinking about political subjectivity as a kind of relational and vulnerable subjectivity. Judith Butler (2010) argues for vulnerability as an ontological moment of human subjects. Subjects – including their corporality – are substantially constituted through the social. Butler provides – besides other feminist writers – a powerful argument for the ethical impulse the notion of vulnerability might be able to contribute to debates on sociality: Each life is dependent on others and this dependency

produces ethical implications of dealing with the general precariousness of existence in a sustainable way (p. 39). As such, Butler's take relates vulnerability with life and survival. Sara Ahmed (2004) understands emotions or affect as a relational mode by itself. It is through emotions that one experiences and understands the limits and borders of oneself. The self finds its shape through the actualization of vulnerability. So, vulnerability in our very existence is what ties us socially one to another. Being vulnerable as a human being is inseparably the fabric of sociality. It brings up the question of responsibility and thus it immediately leads us on political grounds and consequently to political subjectivity (Butler, 2010; Mills, 2007).

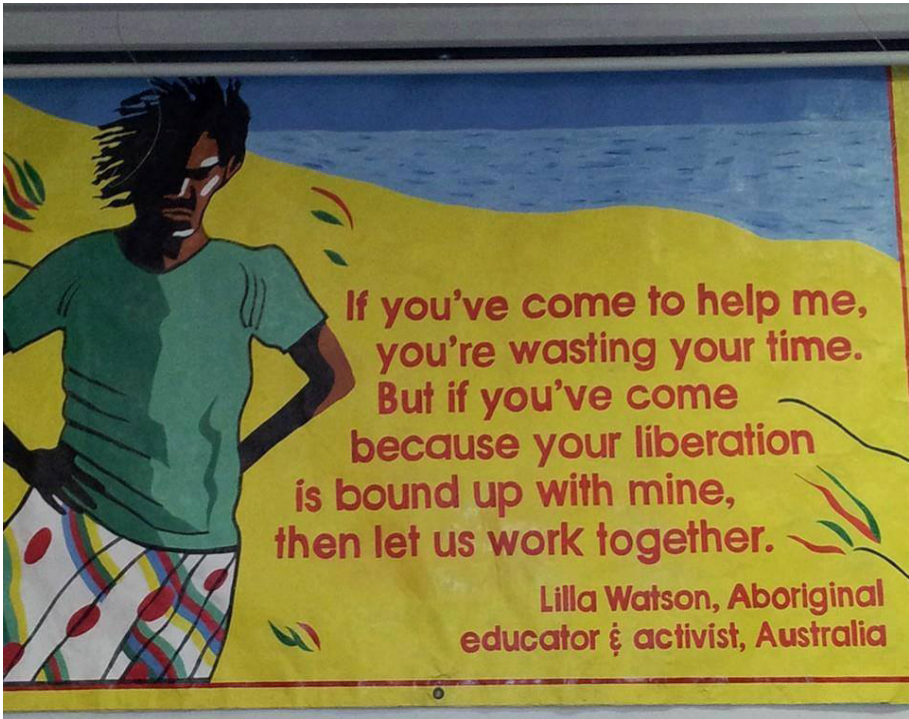
Following the above mentioned theoretical sketches of a vulnerable subject, this paper wants to underline dissident and yet long existent modes of political subjectivity by learning from activist practices and perspectives. The undertaking of this paper is thus to listen to those who already follow alternative ideas of political subjectivity and to initiate impulses to rework the concept of democracy.

### **LEARNING FROM REFUGEE ACTIVISM**

During the last years, refugee activists were amongst those in Germany who strongly pushed the issue of democracy and participation. In 2012, the so called "Freedom March" from Würzburg, a city in southwestern Germany, to Berlin, the capital situated in the country's northeast, gained public attention for the political struggles refugees took up in order to fight for their human rights in Germany. The march was followed by the occupation of central places in different cities, of buildings, demonstrations, hunger strikes and numerous other forms of protests. All aimed to highlight the living situation of the refugees and to change legal regulations discriminating them systematically. The protests were led by refugees and found support among migrant communities, German citizens and other privileged EU citizens within Germany. European attention was drawn to the refugee movement not only during the so called "summer of migration" in 2015, but during several other occasions as well. One of the crucial questions repeatedly raised was regarding the right to stay and the freedom of movement. In the following sections, I will draw upon a few examples from numerous documents, announcements and positions of refugee activists and groups with the aim of listening and learning more about the question of democracy and its subjects.



## VULNERABLE SUBJECTS AS RELATIONAL SUBJECTS



Source: The VOICE Refugee Forum Germany

This image is used by the refugee organization The VOICE Refugee Forum Germany in order to underline its own position. Lilla Watson, an Indigenous activist from Australia, seems to address the political “*Other*”: an imagined ally in a privileged position. The statement refers to the political relationship between the two (political) subjects in question: the *you* – presumably a privileged subject – and the *I*, the Indigenous subject. One layer deeper, the statement gives details of the conception of the (political) subject as such. Watson opposes two conceptions of relation and subjectivity: on the one hand, she clearly rejects a paternalistic attitude of helping and coming in support. Transferred to the German context, where The VOICE Refugee Forum operates, that might apply to all those helping hands who understand their welcoming action as one-way acts of help or support. As a one-way kind of agency, it points to the idea of an autonomous subject providing help or not to the other imagined as different and detached from oneself. Such an attitude is well known from

development policies, but also applies to the relationship of local, *white* German residents towards newcomers. Whiteness systematically goes along with an attitude of helping and generosity towards an (imagined/constructed/othered) *Other*. Watson, in her statement, does not enter negotiations with such a one-sided, patronizing definition of the relationship in question. On the contrary, she repudiates it right away.

On the other hand, Watson argues for a relationship building on reciprocity. Subjectivity and societal change only work in this context if thought of as relational: the liberation of one subject is bound to the liberation of the other. The *You* and *Me* are part of the same political struggle, not because of a shared identity or experience, but their very subjectivity depends on each other, their "liberation is bound up" with each other (The Voice of Refugees, 2003, p.1). Dependency is thus the criteria for cooperation while autonomy – or alleged autonomy – separates. Political subjectivity, as it is understood here, seems to be one of interdependency, of ties and relations on equal grounds. In the Australian context as much as in the one of Germany and the refugees' struggles of recent years, the shared struggle might be understood as one for democracy and its core values of participation – how can one possibly claim to live in a democratic society while systematically discriminating against newcomers to this very same society? How can one claim to adhere to principles of democracy whilst denying a considerable portion of the population basic human rights?

In this specific context, cooperation is embedded into unequal power relations. Working on the principle of solidarity on equal grounds thus does not mean to deny discrimination, power and privileges, but to re-think dichotomous ideas of freedom and power. If domination builds upon difference and hierarchies, we need to ask whether those in power are really free, if the male, bourgeois, white and heterosexual subject is not dependent in its freedom on all of its *others*. Activists in both contexts argue for linking these different and unequal subject positions through a relational understanding of political subjectivity. Such conceptions do have implications on our understanding of democracy: refugee activists speak of alliances between citizens and non-citizens. They highlight the dimensions of citizenship and political rights in their analysis of democracy and political subjectivity. Focusing on the judicial classification, some activists skeptically reclaim more differentiation in order to sensibly deal with intersections of different forms of discrimination (Ünsal, 2015). Subjectivity is interwoven with complex structures of privileges and of discrimination. Still, the judicial dimension by itself is an indicator for inequality as the status of citizenship is key to accessing political participation and subsequent rights. It hints at the necessity to rearrange and rethink mechanisms of democratic inclusion and the possibilities of participation in democracies beyond the framework of citizenship.

Moreover, the idea of the relational subject demands for a re-negotiation of even more



substantial elements of democracy. Rosine Kelz (2015) puts forward the concept as non-sovereignty – as a response to the changing conditions of democracy in the context of migration and what must be learned from the refugee movements. She pleads for an interdependent reading of subjectivity and politics. No sovereign autonomous subject puts up its rules and decides – with all moral right – about the right to stay of others. Following Derrida and activist struggles, Kelz suggests a different form of welcoming culture which understands welcoming not as a gesture of generosity but as an essential, mutual right.

### VULNERABLE SUBJECTS AS HISTORICAL SUBJECTS

Our main goals remain the struggle for equality, justice and human dignity for every refugee in Germany. With a strong affirmation that “We are here because you destroy our countries” we seek to collaborate with groups and initiatives on the basis of solidarity and justice, and we reject any form of paternalism, co-optation and continued colonial injustice. [...] We remain opposed to the deadly migration politics by the European and other Western powers, and their brutal border regime and racist practices of oppression and exploitation. Therefore, our work is always located in the context of resistance against colonial injustice. (The Voice Refugee Forum, 2003, p. 3)

The hegemonic subject of Western democracies is – if at all – historically traced back to the European Enlightenment and its legacy within Europe. It largely ignores colonialism and colonial violence as fundamental mechanism of that period. The autonomous, rational subject of today, in that reading, is a contemporary idea, isolated from the past. Refugee activists’ interventions challenge this understanding and insist on an inclusion of historical interdependencies, the presence and relevance of colonialism and its legacy today. The reasons for flight and migration are linked to the lasting implications of colonial injustice. “We are here because you destroy our countries” (The Voice Refugee Forum, 2003, p. 4) hints at two things: first, again we talk about relationality as core principle of political subjectivity. The *you* and the *we* are closely bound up with each other, this time because of global political dynamics.

Many of the causes of global migration can be traced back to the West’s imperial and capitalist ventures: western-manufactured weapons and armed conflicts, wars of aggression in pursuit of oil and other natural resources, repressive regimes backed by Western governments, climate change and land grabs, and so on. (No Borders, 2012, p. 6)

Global interdependencies touch upon the political, the economic as much as the ecological. Globalisation as a notion for growing global links also needs to be thought of in terms of vulnerability. The activist network No Borders, an infrastructure of

support to migrants in Europe, analyses the causes of migration by referring to such mutual links<sup>2</sup>. Migration policies also need to be mentioned here. They insist on state sovereignty in the European context while, at the same time, Europe massively intervenes in the migration and border policies of Northern African countries. Second, these global linkages are as much current ones as they are rooted in the past, especially in colonial times. Right populist parties and nationalist arguments actively draw on racism as a legacy of colonialism in order to argue for their isolationist visions of European countries. Economic dependencies can be traced back into history; the political situation in some of the countries of origin cannot be understood without historical references..

Still, such historical traces and legacies are frequently ignored in European political theory as much as in daily political life. The migrant subject, remembering this history, is confronted with the reproach of being backward instead of embracing what is thought to be the culture of democracy. Theorist Sara Ahmed (2010a) critically assesses the figure of a melancholic migrant subject within British cultural production. Drawing on psychoanalysis, she rejects hegemonic reproaches that the melancholic migrant is an obstacle to democracy and to an open future because this migrant figure is so concerned with the past. On the contrary, she reads the figure of the melancholic migrant as an expression of the desire of non-migrants to get rid of the other's attachments (Ahmed, 2010b, p. 150).

A concern with histories that hurt is not then a backward orientation: to move on, you must make this return. If anything, we might want to reread melancholic subjects, the ones who refuse to let go of suffering, who are even prepared to kill some forms of joy, as an alternative model of the social good. (Ahmed 2010a, p. 50)

So, on the one hand "histories that hurt" can and should be understood as a productive part of democratic politics. They should be valued as a form of attachment. On the other hand, looking backwards is also very often used as an inspiring and positive reference for struggles against injustice and undemocratic tendencies. No Borders, for example, refers to movements of resistance of migrant workers in 17<sup>th</sup> century England in order to back up their own struggles today (No Borders, 2012). Finally, looking back while discussing democracy might also involve repairing some of the wrongs of democracy's constitution in times of colonialism and enlightenment.

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<sup>2</sup> No Borders continues this explanation of causes of migration by hinting at the active position of migrant subjects. Their decisions are not only driven by external dynamics but are also based on their own desires, hopes, ideas and rational as much as emotional reflections of which kind of life they want to live (No Borders, 2012).

Again, the implications for rethinking democracy and democratic cultures are clear: a perception of sociality and politics and, consequently, also of democracy as linked to vulnerability may start processes of integrating the past into the present and the future alike.

### **VULNERABLE SUBJECTS AS NETWORKING SUBJECTS**

The most successful and inspiring No Borders work has been just about this: creating strong networks to support free movement across Europe's borders. This is the infrastructure of a growing movement of resistance: contacts, information, resources, meeting points, public drop-ins, safe houses, and so on. A pool of formal and informal connections, a web of solidarity, working on both public and clandestine levels. (No Borders, 2012)

People manage to move, live, and evade state control because they are part of communities and networks. Migration happens because of millions of connections between millions of people. Our No Borders networks are one small part of this. Yet, as a movement, we can play an active role in bringing such connections together across national and cultural boundaries. Our struggle is one and the same. (No Borders, 2012)

Both citations underline that thinking of political subjects in terms of relationality to some extent means thinking of them as networked subjects. They are part of networks and, at the same time, they form their very identity out of these networks. The networks hinted at in the above quoted statements of No Borders are twofold: on the one side, there are activist networks of support which provide some kind of infrastructure to those who are on their way across borders or in between borders. On the other hand, there are social or community networks, mainly of migrants, who are themselves hinting at broader networks than those of political support in solidarity. They flow into each other, are not understood as opposing, but again are considered as parts of the same struggle.

Not only activist networks but also research on migrants' media practices underline the importance of networks and thus hint at some kind of networked subject. Maria Ullrich (2017) shows in her research on mobile media use of migrants that digital devices are of crucial importance to people during their flight. Digital devices enable access to necessary information along the route, about safe spaces and possible tactics. The active and complex use migrants make of digital media leads to the conception of the "connected migrant" (Diminescu, 2012). Digital media are used to deal with and negotiate affect, distance, isolation and exposure (Mezzadra, 2017).

It is the very idea of networking which breaks with the autonomous and sovereign political subject. The networking subject necessarily refers to *others* in order to survive and to politically intervene and engage. Networking and solidarity are closely interwoven, the connection is not only established through technical devices and infrastructure but also through affect:

This description of political activism suggests an understanding of solidarity as a political affect that connects people without eradicating difference. Instead of invoking the need for close bonds within a clearly defined and limited group of people, the concept of solidarity stresses the importance of maintaining open political associations. (Kelz, 2015)

Rosine Kelz argues for such a relational reading of solidarity as a form of political affect in her analysis of refugee movements in Europe during the last years (2012-2017). Political agency and thus the figure of a vulnerable, relational political subject is one which is based on the idea of connectedness, of networking, of solidarity – or in other terms of a ‚*we*‘:

We perceive ourselves as a feminist organisation and are one of the few links between the women’s movement and the refugees’ movement. In our group, we experience that women can relate to each other, regardless of all differences like age, origin, religion, status, sexual orientation or other factors, and can make an impact together. Together we develop strategies to achieve political change and take our protest against the inhumane living conditions of refugee women to the public. (Women in Exile, 2015)<sup>3</sup>

This *we* does not negate differences within itself. On the contrary, it functions as a collective despite and beyond differences in a shared and united struggle. Consequently, such a perspective on networking and connecting means to re-think logics of cooperation within democracies and perhaps shifting them away from a focus on shared identities to solidarity and open conceptions of collective agency.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, learning from refugee movements with regard to cultures of democracy might thus mean (at least) three things within the German context. First, it strengthens approaches of feminist and postcolonial theoretical decent to *re-think the democratic*

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<sup>3</sup> Women in Exile is an organisation of refugee women for refugee women. They started operating in the rural region surrounding Berlin. Meanwhile, they operate in several parts of Germany. The activists provide information for newcomers, mostly if they are living in refugee camps. They are active in awareness raising and support women in their specific needs

*subject* as a vulnerable subject in the sense of an existential vulnerability and dependency on others. Vulnerability thus does not overly place an emphasis on exposure and deficits but the inter-relatedness with others. The vulnerable subject is one of relational, affective, historical and connected character as I argue with reference to activist positions throughout this paper.

Second, this vulnerable subject pushes us to *re-shape our conceptions of democratic interaction*: We need to re-define the questions of belonging, of sovereignty, of participation and of movement. If interdependence and relationality is core, how can European countries insist on nationalistic isolation and border regimes which negate all global and historical ties?

Third, the vulnerable subject provides us with ideas of what a future vision of democracy could look like. It could inspire us to *re-imagine an utopia* democracy that could be developed. Such a democracy would be open to newcomers, aware of and ready for reparations of historical and present injustice.

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## Indigenize Democracy – Public Reasoning and Participation as a Democratic Foundation

Sonja John<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*While Amartya Sen (1999) has convincingly argued for democracy as a universal value in his earlier work, current developments might prove him wrong; authoritarian and intolerant forces are on the rise today. In his more recent publication, The Idea of Justice, Amartya Sen (2009) argues for a re-orientation towards an understanding of democracy as “government by discussion”. Following this claim, I argue here for a more intensive investigation of Indigenous concepts, cultures and traditions of democratic concepts since confining attention almost exclusively to Western institutional definitions of democracy has been limiting and parochial. Understanding the history of democratic practice globally involves taking interest in peoples’ public reasoning in different parts of the world. Investigating the connection between the reach of public discussion and the accepted mode of democratic government might offer suggestions on how to develop federal systems that are in line with local democratic traditions and practices.*

**Keywords:** Indigeneity, democracy, public reasoning, refusal, Amartya Sen

### CURRENT REFUSALS IN ETHIOPIAN POLITICS<sup>2</sup>

Democracy is currently in crisis. Although there is no consensus on how to define democracy (EIU, 2017, p. 51), most attempts agree that it is based on a self-controlled government of a state, community or other political body by its own members, employed through a system of power sharing. Community members want to discuss, determine and decide matters affecting their lives. The disregard of this principle of self-government and a (perceived) loss of control over community affairs led to the current protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions in Ethiopia. Since 2014, Oromo

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<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Claudia Brunner for her critical reading and generous comments on an earlier version of this paper and also to the two reviewers for their insightful comments. Any errors are my own.

people have been demonstrating against alleged land appropriation through the controversial Addis Ababa Master Plan, initiated by the federal one-party and ethnic-based government led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. This plan would continue the practice of extending the national capital into the ancestral land of the Oromo people without their prior and informed consent. The resistance against this plan must be seen in the context of preceding Oromo experiences of land dispossession, displacement from their homeland, loss of resources and identity and the repercussions of economic marginalization (Davison, 2016, p. 2).

The Amhara protests of 2016 have a similar source; the root of the issue is the unilaterally determined expansion of the Tigray region into fertile Amhara territory in the Wolkait region. The displaced Wolkait people have formed a committee and have been campaigning in Gondar to regain their land and identity as Amhara. Wolkait committee member Teshager Woldemichael had declared: "We are from Wolkait; we are Amhara, we have always been Amhara, our first language is Amharic" (personal interview, April 10, 2016). The protests became violent during the arrest of Colonel Demeke Zewdu who also urged for a return of the Wolkait district to the Amhara state in his position as leader of the Wolkait Identity Question Committee. Colonel Demeke Zewdu and his defenders resisted his attempted arrest and killed several soldiers. This resulted in more aggressive military action and mass arrests. During the ensuing demonstrations in Gondar, Bahir Dar and elsewhere in the northern region, the specific demands for Wolkait self-determination and the release of political prisoners broadened to demands for more democratic rights. After appeals from religious leaders for peacefulness, protestors were mostly unarmed and changed tactics to holding general strikes in Amhara and Oromo regions. These were outlawed when Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn declared the state of emergency on October 9, 2016.

The state of emergency is a continuation of restrictive regulations intended at silencing critical voices and restoring peace.<sup>3</sup> Adem Abebe has argued that since the anti-terrorism law and the media law in the post-2005 election period have been passed that both freedom of expression and association have already been severely suppressed: there is "no other country in the world where anti-terrorism laws have almost exclusively been applied against journalists and opposition political party members" (Adem, 2012, p. 9). Hence, the media cannot function as a mediator between different groups of society. Further, the anti-corruption laws effectively excluded the opposition from participating in parliament, making the parliament a farce (Adem, 202, p. 6).

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<sup>3</sup> This is a narrow definition of peace being the absence of war; the conflicts remain unresolved.



One cannot discuss issues from different angles when articulating differing perspectives and opinions are prohibited. Adem has attested to the absence of rule of law, which means that no political authority should be higher than the law and the constitution, while the rights of citizens are protected by independent courts. Instead of ruling with rule *of* law, Adem argues throughout his article that the Ethiopian government is ruling the country *by* law, changing the constitution and laws to ensure its continuing reign. For Ethiopia, just as for most sub-Saharan countries, the *Democracy Index* predicts: “much of the region will continue to be characterised as deeply entrenched one-party states that go through the motions of holding elections without providing the freedoms necessary to promote genuine democracy” (EIU, 2017, p. 50).

After the Ethiopian government was criticized for taking an authoritarian turn with the 2016 state of emergency, the Prime Minister acknowledged that the country’s huge youth population has created “dissatisfaction and desperation”. He suggested that his government might increase dialogue: “We have shortcomings in our fledgling democracy, so we want to go further in opening up the political space and engagement with different groups of the society” (cited in Association Press, 2016, p. 5).<sup>4</sup> From where best to draw guidance and inspiration? After the fall of the Derg regime, Ethiopia has turned towards the West and adopted the Westminster model of government. However, while the West with its rather young democratic experience had to look to ancient Greece for inspiration, Ethiopia could draw on Indigenous epistemologies as well as external understandings of democratic systems (Zelalem, 2015; Abebe, Samson and Tessema, 2015; Sklar, 2005; Bahru, 2002; Aadland, 2002). Thus, in its conclusion, this chapter points towards a different tradition in democracy study; one that is respectful of the value of practices that precede the present or Greek traditions but endeavors to move democracy study to a future that is not bound so inextricably to an institutional definition.

This article is an attempt to investigate realization-based comparisons that focus on the advancement of democracy. Currently, the deficiency of politically engaged public reasoning points towards a weakness of democracies. The refusal of different groups to even engage with each other points towards capability deprivation, that people do not have the ability to achieve various combinations of functionings that they have reason to value. Similar to Sen’s approach to develop a theory of justice, the attempt of this paper is not merely studying to achieve some perfectly democratic society or procedures, but about identifying the weaknesses of contemporary democratic systems and suggesting remedies. The departure point is a rather comparative and

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<sup>4</sup> The language clearly indicates a top-down mentality of government, assuming the leaders *grant* rights to people instead of people possessing inherent rights of articulation and participation.

constructive approach: how can democratic practice based on public discussion be advanced? The focus lies clearly on actual realizations, lives and capabilities: “lives that people manage—or do not manage—to live” (Sen, 2010, p. 9). According to Amartya Sen’s capability approach, social realizations are assessed in terms of capabilities that people actually have, rather than in term of their utilities or happiness. Translated into the realm of theorizing democracy, this means that the departure point is the substantive freedoms that people actually have to participate in shaping their democracy. Using an informational focus in assessing democracy, in line with the freedom-based capability approach, one may choose the person’s capability to do things she or he has reason to value and the freedom to determine and articulate what she or he wants, values and ultimately decides to choose (Sen, 2010, p. 232).

The following section sheds some light on scenes of disengagement and refusals in order to argue for an understanding and analysis of democracy on the grounds of open discussion as put forward by Amartya Sen and as practiced traditionally in many Ethiopian communities.

### DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS

The long praised democratic system of public self-government and administration of society is in crisis (EIU, 2017; Preiss and Brunner, 2012). While Amartya Sen (1999) has convincingly argued for democracy as a universal value in his earlier work, current developments might prove him wrong; authoritarian and intolerant forces are widely on the rise today. The “democratic recession”, as democracy scholar Larry Diamond (2015) called it, is not recovering. In many countries of the West, citizens see themselves as detached from the political elites and react with refusal or protest against the establishment. “Political elite” here encompasses governments, legislatures, state institutions, political parties, the media and think tanks. In many countries upon which the West has imposed its own ideas of democracy, the promises of peace, self-government, justice, participation and sustainable development have not materialized.<sup>5</sup> Hence, processes of institutionalized democratization are being reversed in several countries, along with a strengthening of authoritarian government and diminishing discussion.

For the year 2016, the *Democracy Index*<sup>6</sup> attested to a global democratic recession (EIU, 2017, p. 3). Out of the 165 countries and territories monitored, 72 had a declining level of democracy, 38 an improving and 57 a stagnating level. The indicators of the index examine five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the

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<sup>5</sup> The West has given financial support conditional on the existence of democratic institutions, fostering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and guaranteeing human rights. But experience has shown that fulfilling these requirements on paper do not guarantee democratic governments.

functioning of government, political participation and political culture. Based on a combined score achieved in these categories, the country's governmental system is classified on a 10-point scale, ranging from "authoritarian regime" to "full democracy". While in 2015, according to the *Index*, 8.9% of the world's population lived in a "full democracy", this number dropped to 4.5% in 2016 (EIU, 2017, p. 3). Only 19 countries were listed within the "full democracy" category and within this category, most countries had decreased scores in comparison to their 2015 results. 57 countries were classified as "flawed democracies", 40 as "hybrid regimes" and 51 as "authoritarian regimes" (EIU, 2017, p. 3).

What complicates the matter of the lack of consensus on how to define democracy is that there is also no consensus on how to measure democracy (EIU, 2017, p. 51). Overused as it is, the term democracy has become an 'empty significant', as sociologists like to call it. How can we best give recommendations and suggestions regarding a topic that is in a definitional limbo? *The Economist Democracy Index* has been following political sociologist Larry Diamond (2008, 2015) in his understanding of the nature and the state of democracy. This is something that is not surprising as Diamond also applies an economist's approach. For him, the acceptance of democracy is subject to cyclical economic booms and downturns similar to economic cycles of growth and recession. Diamond believes that the many countries currently in what he calls "democratic recession" phase will eventually pass into the next cycle of democracy boom. This understanding of a naturally given sequence of the acceptance of democracy leads to the assumption that there is no need for action since the deflation will eventually pass and better days will come. However, there is reason to be alert since recent authoritarian voices resemble and re-echo those that led to World War II. Hence, recent support for racist parties, protests against democratic institutions and the refusal to participate in elections or public debate have to be taken very seriously if one cares about democracy and peace.

Against the background of these occurrences, the *Index* warns of the demise of democracy: "The trend towards declining political participation, which has been a feature of all the advanced democracies in recent decades, is a threat to the future of democracy" (EIU, 2017, p. 24). For a better understanding of how political

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<sup>6</sup> It is not unproblematic to apply this index normatively when trying to put forward Indigenous understandings of democracy; it includes many countries but excludes others; it canonizes questionable democracy definitions, and is mainly an Euro-American instrument at the notorious intersection of politics and economics. The Index acknowledges the connection between economic recession and democracy recession but the authors do not regard the structural inequalities that will exclude more people from socio-economic participation; trickle-down trickles even less in the U.S. without slavery or dispossessing the Natives; in the UK without colonizing half the world; in Germany without forced labor or the Marshall Plan.

participation can save democracy, I argue here that it is useful to move away from Larry Diamond's institutional definition of democratic practice to Amartya Sen's foregrounding of open discussion and public reasoning.

The *Democracy Index* for the year 2016 carries the subtitle *Revenge of the "deplorables"*. This is taken from a quote by Hillary Clinton who, during the presidential campaign, called her opponent's supporters a "basket of deplorables", who do not represent the U.S. (EIU, 2017, p. 1). While Clinton distances herself from these "folks" (EIU, 2017, p. 1), her successful adversary purposefully appealed to the angry and anti-political resentment of large parts of the "electorate who feel that the two mainstream parties no longer *speak for them* [emphasis added]" (EIU, 2017, p. 12). It was during the U.S. presidential election that it became more evident that these different groups do not talk to each other. What they have in common is their distrust of the media. Today, the "oldest democracy's" president often expresses his outright distrust in and the obsolescence of basic democratic institutions like the court system or the media. The lack of political participation and democratic culture was responsible for downgrading the U.S. from a "full democracy" in 2015 to a "flawed democracy" in 2016 (EIU, 2017, pp. 4-5).

In the U.S., the failure of democracy as public discussion is particularly ironic since their structure was adopted from the inclusive, debate- and consensus-oriented system of the Haudenosaunee (League of the Iroquois) (Obama, 2013, p. 1; Alfred, 1995) and also since America's Indigenous societies have been practicing democratic traditions since time immemorial (Akwasasne Notes, 1986 [1978]), a point to which I return later.

The German translation for "deplorables" may be "das Pack", an expression used by (at that time) Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister Sigmar Gabriel, referring to neo-Nazis putting fire to refugee homes (Zeit, 2016, p. 3). On a different occasion, he showed neo-Nazis his middle finger when they disrupted his speech. Even before the long summer of migration to Germany in 2015, far right parties with clearly racist ideas and ideals have been gaining supporters and allocated more space within the reported media public voices. Groups that called themselves an *alternative* (Pegida, Alternative für Deutschland) protested the establishment and demanded policies that puts Germans without a migration background (if there are any) first. "We are the people" shouts were repeated from the fall of the socialist GDR regime (1989) but these turned from uniting to excluding slogans. The established media was defamed as "lying press" ("*Lügenpresse*") and even movement leaders refused to talk to professional journalists.

In the UK, the Brexit debates in 2016 were similarly polarized but a bit more civil. However, it also spurred a new wave of anti-migration – in a country that had colonized

half the world itself. On March 22, 2017, the British citizen Adrian Russell Ajao (aka Khalid Masood) with a migration background engaged in a suicide attack at London's Westminster Bridge and House of Parliament. The parliament is the most fundamental institution of democracy. The word etymologically derives from the old French *parler* which means "to talk" and *parlement*, "conversation". Prime Minister May declared that someone has tried to "silence [emphasis added] our democracy" (cited in Dearden, 2017, 2). However, what this attack has in common with many terror attacks in the West<sup>7</sup>, is that they are performed by marginalized members of society whose voices are not being heard. While Prime Minister May was quick to blame "Islam terrorism" (35), she failed to critically assess the situation of democracy in the UK. Do all members, so far defined by citizen status, have substantive freedom to participate in public discussions and shape them equally? The accessibility of credible information is one of the main aspects that connects democracy pessimists across international borders, class or ethnic lines. Hence, democracy must also be seen more generally in terms of the capacity to enrich reasoned engagement through enhancing informational availability and the feasibility of open and interactive discussions.

I have included these three Western examples of rather role model democracies – U.S. as the oldest operating system, Germany as the success story after dictatorship and the UK whose Westminster model has been exported to most African countries – in order to argue that they are not the best prototypes of orientation for countries like Ethiopia that are trying to eventually move from authoritarian to full democracies. What these examples have in common with the Ethiopian case is a refusal of large segments of the public to engage in open discussion. Amartya Sen's (1999) assessment of democracy as a universal value can be disputed today. In several countries that are formal democracies, people gradually stopped communicating with each other. What democracy pessimists share across national borders, class, gender and ethnicity lines is a perceived loss of control over local matters and a massive distrust of the media in general. Groups deny others the right to be heard by confining their attention to some people and not others, presuming that some people are more relevant than others, that only their interests matter or voices count. When democracy is understood as public discussion then a refusal to engage in dialogue poses the most fundamental threat to democracy. Refusal has been theorized in different ways. In political and social sciences, refusal is regarded as the starting point for substantial critique. Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) wrote of how the concept of resistance enables a more complex recognition and theorization of "the nature and forms of domination" (p. 41). Refusal has also been recognized as a strategy for decolonization, self-determination, gaining of rights and recognition and for rejecting certain systems of governance"

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<sup>7</sup> I.e. the 2017 Manchester bombs, 2015 Paris attacks, or the 2013 Boston marathon bombing.

(Simpson, 2014). The diverse approaches share the understanding that refusal marks the point of a limit having been reached, when people refuse to continue in a particular way. They are unsatisfied or disappointed with the way that things are going and refuse or resist to participate in the process that keep things this way. Through refusal, they express their dissatisfaction with how things are and the direction in which things are moving (Ahmed, 2014, p. 41).<sup>8</sup>

Here, I want to theorize refusal as a concept to think with and think about, to recognize and theorize. Being more concerned with formal refusal linked to state institutions, media and class struggle, I want to recognize refusal as an element of political relations and, as such, interpret the practice of refusal as a cutting off of political relations, as withdrawing the right to be represented by the existing institutions and their personnel. As I intend to argue, refusal marks a point where the democratic practice of public discussion has obviously failed. Hence, the current political moment demands that a new theoretical conversation on refusal be opened and that practical attempts on a practice of listening to all be initiated. In Ethiopia, for example, refusal can also be viewed as generative and strategic, as a deliberate move towards change and to include all in discussions over decision-making processes. In order to grasp the dissatisfaction with the current mode of democracy, I argue here, that a common understanding has to shift from an institutional focus to foregrounding democracy as public reasoning. In the following, I briefly highlight this shift in Sen's writing before turning to Indigenous practices of democratic cultures as *leitmotifs*.

### **PUBLIC REASONING AS A DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATION**

Analyzing the connection between the reach of public discussion and the acceptance of democracy can help to explain the current weakness of democratic systems evident in the lack of participation and wide refusal to engage with other segments of society. Detrimental for this investigation are two processes: first, foregrounding an understanding of democracy as public discussion instead of the pure existence of democratic institutions. Second, based on this shift in definition, acknowledging that democracy as public discussion has been practiced in other regions, long before the times of Plato and Aristoteles.

In his earlier work, Sen (1999) adopted an unproblematized and narrow model of democracy. He stated the often – and to this day – repeated misconception that democracy has its roots in ancient Greece:

The idea of democracy originated, of course, in ancient Greece, more than two

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<sup>8</sup> Not surprising that a lot of protest movements had slogans like ;YaBasta!. The Indigenous movement Idle No More, however, refuses to refuse any more.

millennia ago. Piecemeal efforts at democratization were attempted elsewhere as well, including India. But it is really in ancient Greece that the idea of democracy took shape and was seriously put into practice (albeit on a limited scale)<sup>9</sup>, before it collapsed and was replaced by more authoritarian and asymmetric forms of government. There were no other kinds anywhere else. (Sen, 1999, p. 3)

When Sen stated in 1999 that democracy originated in ancient Greece, he applied an institution-focused definition where the sheer existence of a parliament and elections qualifies for democracy. Although the term undeniably has its roots in Greece and efforts in parliamentary democracy were recorded there, this ancient country no longer upholds its assumed unique position as first and only birthplace of democracy. This was further underlined by Sen (2010) who emphasizes an understanding of democracy as open public reasoning. Within the ten-year period between the publication of *Development as Freedom* (1999) and *The Idea of Justice* (2010 [2009]), Sen emancipated himself from the quoted statement above and revealed his new understanding and definition of democracy.

In contemporary political philosophy, democracy is no longer seen in terms of the demands of public balloting, but much more capaciously, in terms of exercising publicreason (Rawls, 1999; Ackerman 1989; Benhabib, 1996; Dworkin, 2006). Sen (2010) now asserts that the “success of democracy is not merely a matter of having the most perfect institutional structure” but the working of democratic institutions depends on the activities of human agents in utilizing opportunities for reasonable realization (p. 354). This thinking has brought about a general recognition that the central issue lies within a broader understanding of democracy as a process of political participation, dialogue and public interaction. Sen argues for a re-orientation towards an understanding of democracy as “government by discussion” and judging democracy “not just by the institutions that formally exist but by the extent to which different voices from diverse sections of the people can actually be heard” (pp. 3, xii). He now stresses that institutions and elections are just one aspect of democracy. “The effectiveness of ballots themselves depends critically on what goes on with balloting, such as free speech, access to information and freedom of dissent” (p. 327). Hence, elections can be thoroughly inadequate, especially when “expressions of public views are thwarted by censorship, informational exclusion and a climate of fear, along with

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<sup>9</sup> The shortcomings of ancient democratic experiences that Sen attests as “on a limited scale” are evident in its exclusionary nature. The right for political participation was limited to a minority of property-owning male adults. Athenian democracy was based on excluding women, slaves and the pauper from public discussion. Hence, the majority of voices went unheard (Preiss and Brunner, 2012, p. 11).



the suppression of political opposition and the independence of the media and the absence of basic civil rights and political liberties” (p. 327).

Tolerance of diverse views, that is so necessary for open discussion, is missing in today’s political debates. If we view democracy as participatory public reasoning then the end of discussion is inevitably the end of democracy. Amartya Sen (p. 111) reminds us that in order to safeguard the liberties of all, we have to cultivate tolerance of each other in our respective values; this is a public reasoning justification for cultivating tolerance and open discussion. Public reasoning fosters a questioning of the normative standing of preferences, questioning the demands of liberty and re-examining the norms of reasoning and behavior. Developing the willingness to listen to each other’s opinions and reasons would allow the currently refusing groups in, for example; the U.S., Germany, UK or in Ethiopia to enter into an open discussion and eventually democratize their communities and countries.

Sen argues throughout his book how central the role of public reasoning is for an understanding of justice: “‘Discussion-less justice’ can be an incarcerating idea” (p. 337). This recognition connects the idea of justice with the practice of democracy: if participative open debate is possible and practiced, the more just a society can be because multiple voices are being heard to better inform the discussion and decision-making processes. The strength and reach of public reasoning depends on the opportunities for discussion and interactions that the institutions and practice provide. As John Rawls (1999) phrased it in his *Theory of Justice*: “The definitive idea for deliberative democracy is the idea of deliberation itself. When citizens deliberate, they exchange views and debate their supporting reasons concerning public political questions” (pp. 579-580). Hence, the essential connection between public reasoning and participatory social decisions is central to the acceptance and effectiveness of a democratic society.

This shift in perception of democracy implies that other cultural practices – that are not officially institutionalized or labeled as democracy – do now qualify as democratic. Sen now asserts that democracy does not exclusively belong to the West and that it is not a quintessential ‘Western’ idea. The practice of elections, in fact, has had a considerable history in non-Western societies, but it is the broader view of democracy in terms of public reasoning that makes it abundantly clear that a cultural critique of democracy as a purely regional phenomenon fails altogether” (pp. 330-331). Sen corrects this earlier view, stating that the “belief that democracy has not flourished anywhere in the world than in the West is widely held and often expressed” and calls this belief an “ultimately a wrong and superficial diagnosis” (pp. 322, 328). Now, better understanding the roots of democracy in the world, Amartya Sen points out that we have to take an interest in the history of people’s participation and public reasoning



in different parts of the world: “We would fail to understand the pervasive demands of participatory living if we take democracy to be a kind of specialized cultural product of the West” (p. 322). After recognizing ancient Greece’s contribution to the development of democracy, Sen emphasizes that the tradition of public discussion has had a much more widespread history. He mentions councils in several Asian countries (Iran, Bactria, India), forms of public reasoning in the Middle East and stresses the exceptional tolerance of diversity of views in the Muslim world that oftentimes gave asylum to persecuted *Others* from Europe (pp. 329ff.). Examples from several Ethiopian nationalities could enrich this collection, as the following section shows.

### INDIGENIZE DEMOCRACY

Instead of concentrating on the West as a *leitmotif* for an ideal democratic state, we should redirect our attention to societies that actually have long experiences in democratic cultural practices: Indigenous peoples of the world. As Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson has pointed out, academia has so far failed in effectively studying political cultures of Indigenous peoples either robustly or critically. Anthropology has dealt almost exclusively with Indigenous peoples in an ahistorical and depoliticized sense, whereas political science is relatively new to questions of Indigenous politics because of their rather Western, institutional and statist focus (Simpson, 2014, p. 11).<sup>10</sup>

Indigenous modes of self-governance can lay grounds for decolonizing externally introduced tribal governments in settler states (U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand) and offer democracy studies insights into non-Western democratic modes as cultural practices and lived traditions.

The Haudenosaunee (also known as Iroquois or Confederacy of the Six Nations) were accredited to have had the “new world’s first federal system” (Morgan, 1996 [1851], p. 8). This system not only provides/provided for a check-and-balance system that has inspired the founding mothers and fathers in establishing the U.S. political system<sup>11</sup>, Haudenosaunee politics also provided mechanisms through which all people actively engaged in the affairs of the community. Mohawk scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (1995, p. 78ff.) has characterized Iroquoian democracy as consensual decision making and as a participatory political process. The basis for this process is open discussion. The culture of listening to each other in an all-inclusive, consensus-based

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<sup>10</sup> Duncan Ivison’s (2000) compilation of articles on the rights of Indigenous peoples is noteworthy to mention as one exception.

<sup>11</sup> Although the extent of influence is still debated, ranging from a complete copy to mere similarities, then-President Barack Obama has acknowledged that when “the Framers gathered to write the United States Constitution, they drew inspiration from the Iroquois Confederacy” (Obama, 2013, 1).

forum constitutes cultural practices that date back long before the hey-days of ancient Greece. Most Native nations in the Americas had traditional all-inclusive governing systems and many were either matrilineal or matriarchal (Simpson, 2014, pp. 15, 57, 147, 162). Diné writer Lloyd Lee (2008) stresses that the continuation of the Diné people “depends on all people, not just a few” (p. 101).

After colonization, Indigenous nations within the U.S. were required to form tribal governments under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 and in Canada according to the Indian Act. In both contexts, these tribal governments do not represent Indigenous political traditions but stand in stark contrast to them. For example, leadership is now elected but not selected and decisions are made on the basis of majority rule but not through consensus. Tribal governments resemble Western ideas of institutionalized democracy and remain under the supervision and domination of the settler state. The IRA and the Indian Act brought severe internal conflicts to Native nations<sup>12</sup> as they were written by the federal governments *for* Native peoples without deep knowledge of Indigenous self-governing practices. However, very few First Nations have considered Indigenizing their political structures. One of the few exceptions is the White Earth Nation of Anishinaabeg Natives that, in 2009, ratified a new constitution which may be the first official (meaning: on paper) Indigenous democratic constitution. “The Constitution of the White Earth Nation was conceived and ratified as a resistance to a federal executive constitution and as a necessary structure and manifestation of Native politics” (Vizenor and Doerfler, 2012, p. 17). This constitution merges Anishinaabeg traditional practices of governance, like community councils and cultural reciprocity, with political divisions of power, providing for a system that ensures rights and equity for its citizens.

In the African context, political scientist Richard Sklar (2005, p. 8), has argued for incorporating traditional institutions with the organs of sovereign state governments. This was done in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa with dual goals of preventing a boycott of state elections by traditional clans or weakening the authority of the kingdom by maximizing the status of the federal system (Sklar, 2005, p. 12). The idea of mixed government has been raised since the time of ancient Greece whenever the challenge arises to consolidate dualistic forms of political authority, i.e. combining institutions that protect interests of the rich with other institutions that protect the interests of the poor. Sklar asks to what extent constitutions of sovereign states should be shaped by principles derived from Indigenous political traditions. He refers to this linkage that binds and strengthens the dualistic system of government as first and second dimensions of political space; first dimension being the sovereign state and the second dimension the traditional systems of government (Sklar, 2005, p. 4). Since

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<sup>12</sup> *Divide et impera par excellence.*

he builds his argument on the premises of legal foundations, he does not advocate for founding of Indigenous politics: public reasoning. He finds more adequate replies when turning to democratic cultural practices instead of institutions.

Investigations into Ethiopian traditional government systems have found that they often permit a greater degree of public participation than Western forms of parliamentary democracies. But their findings are always limited due to recurring conceptual problems; they are either purely ethnologically descriptive (Abebe, Samson and Tessema, 2015; Bahru, 2002; Aadland, 2002) or they set normative the old-fashioned Western institutionalized understanding of democracy (Zelalem, 2015; Sklar, 2005). A few scholars have considered the potential of Indigenous forms and knowledge of governing systems in enhancing participative democracies. Practices of consensus-based participatory public discussions can easily be found amongst Indigenous communities in Ethiopia. The Gadaa system was found to have a greater potential of protecting a constitution than the current Ethiopian federal system could ever offer (Zelalem, 2015, p. 36). Lecturer for law Zelalem Tesfaye investigates whether the Gadaa system of governance could be applied at the state level despite the ethnic federalism prevalent in Ethiopia. But he also bases his inquiry on “indigenous versus [emphasis added] modern institutions” (Zelalem, 2015, p. 36) and sets the criteria for central normative Western democratic institutions to be ticked off.

These relevant and legitimate questions would produce more relevant and more legitimate answers if the dual forms of political authority were not treated dialectically or in opposition to each other. If the question is how to transform the current imperfect forms of democracy to better cultural practices of public discussion, then it would make more sense to treat Indigenous forms of governing as the first dimension of government and the institutions as second.

## CONCLUSION

The current weakness of many democracies is evident by their deficiency of politically engaged public reasoning. While the fundamental institutions are of unquestioned importance, they become useless when the public cannot engage in shaping them. To ask how things are going and whether they can be improved is a constant and inescapable part of the pursuit of academia and the advancement of democratic societies. The improvement of democratic practices and the removal of autocratic processes demand engagement with institutional choice and behavior adjustment based on public discussion of what is promised, how institutions actually work and what needs to improve. We have to seek institutions that *promote* democracy, rather than treating the institutions as themselves manifestations of democracy, which would reflect a kind of institutionally fundamentalist view. It is the intent of this article to

contribute to this project by spurring on more research about Indigenous conceptions and cultural practices of democracy based on tolerance and public discourse in the non-West.

Ethiopia is one of the world's richest countries in terms of civilization, history and culture. This wealth includes democratic traditions in various Ethiopian societies that date back to time immemorial. The basic democratic principles of self-government, equality, representation, voice, open debate, consensus as well as participation in agenda setting and decision making have been practiced as traditional cultures on local levels throughout various Ethiopian societies. What I am arguing is that there is a disjuncture between the most common understandings of democracy and the various traditions at work in the canon of democracy studies. However meaningful and flexible democratic traditions may be in day-to-day experiences in many Ethiopian communities, particularly in the southern regions, the literature to date has been too narrow to capture these. So far, the literature on democracy in Ethiopia has operated according to tight, discursively controlled, theoretically delimited and canonical imperatives of federalism. What I argue for is that, instead of turning to the West with its Westminster model and its rather young democratic experience, Ethiopia could turn towards its own internal resources and incorporate democratic principles that have been practiced for centuries at local levels onto a national level. Recovering unheard voices on democratic experiences will add to expanding the project of understanding the history, present and future of democracy.

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## **Regulation of Intra-Party Democracy in Ethiopia: A Review of the Constitution and Party Laws**

*Teguada Alebachew*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*Legal regulations directed at political parties are a fairly recent phenomenon. Laws regulating the internal business of parties constitute an important part of the developments on party regulations. Some countries have come up with laws requiring political parties to implement democratic principles with regard to their internal activities. This article identifies the regulation of internal party democracy under Ethiopian laws and puts them in an international context so as to effectively carry out comparisons. The findings generally show that party regulations in Ethiopia are largely focused on parties' operations and external rather than internal behavior. Only a few provisions relevant to the regulation of internal matters of parties are available in the Constitution and the Proclamation for Party Registration. However, as this essay argues effective participation in and of political parties is hardly feasible without regulations for intra-party democracy.*

**Keywords:** Political parties, regulation, intra-party democracy, democracy

State regulations directed at political parties are a relatively modern-day phenomenon. It was in the 1940s that countries began to make laws directly targeting the behavior and functioning of political parties (European Commission for Democracy through Law, 2010, p. 1). Since then, a considerable number of countries have made regulatory laws with varying degree and purpose directed towards political parties (European Commission for Democracy through Law, 2010, p. 1). State regulation of political parties is necessary given the crucial role parties play in the electoral process in particular and the democratic process in general. In general, state regulation is important in order to ensure an effective participation of political parties in the electoral and democratic processes.

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Party regulation is broad and can be implemented for different purposes. Depending on the kind of the regime in power, countries may regulate parties for different purposes. Dictatorial regimes may make party regulations to lessen parties' competitive power. Party regulatory laws in the vast majority of Asian countries, for instance, argued in favour of having a restrictive party regulation (International IDEA, 2006). Contrarily, in democratic countries, parties are regulated aiming at democratic goals. More often than not, parties' internal rules set the tone regarding the importance of party democracy. This is even true for the Chinese Community Party which evaluated itself for lack of internal democracy; and underlined that the endurance of the party depends on better Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) (Li, 2009, p. 2). Yet, political parties, despite setting the tone of the significance of party democracy in their internal rule, may lack the commitment to implement it on the ground. State regulation is hence important to oblige parties to abide by the rules of internal democracy.

This paper investigates the position of the regulation of internal party democracy under Ethiopian laws. As such, the provision of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and other laws: the Proclamation for Party Registration, the Electoral Proclamation and the Proclamation for Code of Conduct for Political Parties' are reviewed during the course of this article. The paper is organized into five sections. The first four sections lay the theoretical foundation discussing the meaning, the elements and the potential of IPD and how IPD regulations can be made functional. The later section addresses the regulation of IPD under the FDRE Constitution and other party laws.

### **MEANING OF INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY**

IPD is a democracy within a party and the extent to which a party pledges and commits itself to the principles of democracy. IPD is when democratic principles guide a party's internal functioning. Internal party democracy is about whether there is internal distribution of authority at different levels, bodies and individuals rather than a concentration of decision-making power on one person (usually party leaders) or on a few groups or on one single organ. Internal democracy is about the degree by which we can measure the extent to which a party is democratically organized and also allows us to compare parties accordingly (Čular, 2009, pp. 69-70). Internal party democracy should be taken as a neutral term and valued only if it contributes to the quality of democratization on the federal level. As such, an internal democracy is not a standalone concept and hence should be treated as an extension of the democracy at state level.

Scholars have come up with a set of identifiable features for internal democracy within a party including; that members have equal participation in decision making including



in policy making, in the selection of leaders for internal positions as well as candidates for representative bodies and their role in party organs at all levels of the party structure, representation of underrepresented groups including but not limited to the following women, language and ethnic minorities, decentralization (horizontal and vertical) of decision making, institutionalization and appropriate use of party fund (Scarrow, 2005; Mimpfen, 2007; Salih, 2006).

### **ELEMENTS OF IPD**

The main elements of IPD include (1) members' equal right to vote and participate in political parties, (2) appropriate use of party funds, (3) representation and participation of disadvantaged groups and (4) institutionalization.

(1) A party which empowers its members to influence a party's decision-making process is considered internally democratic. Members must equally influence the decision-making process within the party including in the formulation of party program, candidate and leaders' selection. As well, members should have equal opportunities to assume a leadership role in the party. Acknowledgment of one person; one vote, right to participate and dissent is also at the centre of the idea of IPD. Beyond recognizing rights of members as individual citizens, equal participation of members is considered useful in promoting a deliberative decision-making process which is critical to develop an informed and articulated party program and selecting appealing party leaders and candidates (Mimpfen, 2005, pp. 1-2). Empowerment and recognition of equality of members in a political party has also been shown to have the potential to reduce, if not to avoid, dominance of party figures or elites in the party's decision-making process as well as the selection of candidates on the basis of clientelism and family relationship and unequal representation of interest of all groups. Mohamed Salih (2006, pp. 54-55), for instance, identified the dominance of elites, non-competitive leadership elections, discriminatory selection of candidates and clientelism as challenges to internal democracy in Africa.

(2) Open and equal participation of members in all aspect of party internal functioning is a viable means of creating cohesive and robust parties (Ojukwu and Olaifa, 2011, p. 28). Internal cohesion of parties, on the other hand, is crucial for parties to win the hearts of the electorate during election. For a party to be successful in election, it is important that it appears cohesive in front of the electorate (Ogundimu, 2010 as cited by Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011, p. 28).

(3) A party's internal democracy is also measured in relation to a party's attention to accommodate disadvantaged groups including women, persons with disabilities and language and ethnic minorities in the party's decision-making process and in party

leadership role. Involving disadvantaged groups in decision making in political parties may require some affirmative measures. Some countries have legislations requiring parties to apply a quota scheme for these groups, particularly for women.

(4) An institutionalization of internal party activities is another variable used to measure internal party democracy (Scarrow, 2005, p. 6). According to Scarrow, institutionalization in political parties is the extent to which internal party activities are performed in an established system. It is about the availability and potency of party organizational structure to effectively and efficiently respond to all party matters. Decentralized (vertically and horizontally) party structures and the existence of party organs for conflict resolution describe an institutionalized party according to Scarrow. The existence of a somehow independent and strong body for party conflict management is integral to creating robust and internally democratic parties. In a nutshell, institutionalized parties are considered predicable and viable to establishing a stable government at state level.

Using party funds for legitimate purposes is also considered necessary for party democracy. There is an increasing trend whereby governments allocate money for political parties. Parties may also get money from other legitimate sources than the government. Accordingly, how and for what purposes this money is spent has become a concern for governments in democracy. Inappropriate use of party funds could have many distorting effects, involving corruption, buying of votes and clientelism (Griner & Zovatto, 2005, p. 19). Use of party funds has thus become one subject of state regulation political parties.

### **POLITICAL PARTIES AND REGULATION OF IPD UNDER ETHIOPIAN LAW**

As with the constitutions of older democracies, the FDRE Constitution has left parties and their extraordinary role in political processes unaddressed. The constitution is devoid of any provision which defines political parties or their role in the political process in the country. The constitution makes general mention of political parties as associations rather than as unique associations which play a critical role in the democratic processes. This appears like the framers of the constitution did not intend to consider the creation and participation of political parties as also being in the interest of the formation of the political will of the society. Accordingly, the constitution lacks a provision guiding the specific internal activities of parties.

The constitution, under article 31, prohibits the formation of associations and political organizations that violate relevant laws or subvert the constitutional order. Also, article 9 of the constitution requires any form of associations, including political parties, to

enforce and obey the constitution. These provisions are directed at regulating the external behavior of parties. The only provision in the constitution relevant to the regulation of IPD is article 38 (2) & (3). Article 38 (2) guarantees everyone a right to join in any association, including in political parties, as long as he or she meets the membership requirements of the respective associations or a political party. Even here, the constitution has left the membership requirement to be determined by the respective associations. More relevant to the issue at hand, article 38 (3) puts in place a general requirement that election to the position of responsibility in any association, including political parties, shall be made in a free and democratic manner. This shows that, irrespective of the issue of freedom of association, there is an interest on the part of the constitution that the practices of the association, including political parties, not be arbitrary.

Accordingly, this specific provision of the constitution can give the government a legitimate reason to require political parties to be democratic internally and enact a regulatory law to this end. Article 51 (15) of the constitution, on the other hand, empowered the federal parliament to make laws governing political parties any time it deems necessary so as to enforce the political rights of citizens recognized and protected within the constitution. Accordingly, if, for instance, the government believes that lack of IPD and arbitrariness in the political parties' internal functioning is negatively affecting people's political right protected within the constitution; it can legitimately come up with laws to further regulate IPD. The recent state regulation on the internal activities of charities and societies, despite a clear constitutional provision to this effect, is a good precedent towards regulating parties.

### **REGULATION OF IPD UNDER ETHIOPIAN PARTY LAWS**

Party laws refer to the laws that regulate how parties must act and behave both internally and externally. These include both laws with permissive and obligatory provisions against parties' behavior and practices. Relevant elements of these categories in Ethiopia are: the Proclamation for Political Party Registration No. 573/2008, the Electoral Proclamation (Amended) No. 532/2007 and the Proclamation to provide for the Electoral Code for Political Parties No. 662/2009. The Political Party Registration Proclamation has seven chapters addressing different sets of issues ranging from how parties must be formed, operated and dissolved to the rights of members. It also addresses the responsibilities of political parties upon failure to respect the conditions laid down in this law and other laws of the country.

The proclamation generally focuses on parties' external behavior: what goals parties must and must not champion and what legal rules they must adhere to in promoting their goals. Only a few provisions are found to address the internal affairs of parties.

In fact, more specifically, article 16 of the proclamation grants political parties independence to determine their internal organization and process. It allows political parties to determine in their bylaws the procedures of adopting and amending their political program, as well as the frequency of meetings, determining internal organizational structure and establishing branch offices anywhere in the country. Accordingly, there is no legally provided procedure for parties to follow in their internal dealings. Parties are hence at liberty to decide on all aspects of internal organization and processes. The proclamation also does not provide a general principle for internal party activities to be governed by democracy. However, the proclamation provides provisions regulating the rights of members and sources and use of party fund.

The proclamation guarantees members the rights to participate in the meetings of the party, to vote and be elected. The manner of participation of members in a meeting and the procedure of decision making is still left to the parties to be determined in their own bylaws (Ethiopian Proclamation, Article 28). Political parties are required not to curtail the rights of members as citizens of this country i.e. their right to vote and to be elected (Ethiopian Proclamation, Article 15 (2)). Besides which, the proclamation requires party statutes to include details on the equality of votes among members of the political party (Ethiopian Proclamation, Article 15(19) (I)). Also, as part of the requirement for registration, the proclamation puts a prerequisite for political parties to present documents showing that the leaders of the party are elected by the general assembly (Ethiopian Proclamation, Article 8(f)). Though not provided clearly, this requirement has a tone of impliedly requiring positions for party leadership to be made in election rather than a veiled selection by the informal party lines. A right for members to withdraw from membership at any time is also established under article 31 (3). While political parties can expel members from party membership in accordance with the bylaws of the party, the proclamation guarantees members a right to challenge the decision in front of the Federal High Court (Ethiopian Proclamation, Article 30 (2)).

A more detailed regulation is provided in the proclamation regulating political parties' use of state allocated funds and other funds acquired from other legitimate sources. Chapter five of the proclamation (42-56) talks about the legitimate or illegitimate sources of funds for political parties, how political parties may get government funds, how party funds and other properties should be used, a requirement to keep books and accounts, financial reports to the Election Board of Ethiopia (2012) and outlines the respective penalties and liabilities of political parties for their failure to respect the requirements provided in the proclamation in this regard.

The proclamation has empowered the Election Board to oversee the operation and decided on the registration and dissolution of political parties in Ethiopia (Ethiopian

Proclamation, Article 7, 8, 9 (1-17), 37, 38 and 39). The decision of the Board on cancelling registration and dissolution is subject to revision by the Federal High Court upon application of the party or members. The Federal High Court also has the power to dissolve a political party on grounds of criminal charges or parties' act in violation of the Constitution and the Registration Proclamation (Ethiopian Proclamation, Article 40).

With regard to promoting equal representation of underrepresented groups, such as women, in a political party, neither the constitution nor the party laws provide specific provisions to this regard. The Party Registration Proclamation tries to indirectly encourage the participation of women. Article 45 (2) (b) of the same proclamation stated that the number of women candidates nominated by political parties will serve as a criterion for apportionment of state funds amongst political parties.

Other party laws: the Electoral Proclamation and the Proclamation to Provide for the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties are found to be less relevant to the issue of regulating internal party democracy. The Electoral Proclamation (Amended) No. 532/2007 addresses parties' relationships with the Board and the electorate. Also, the Proclamation to provide for the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties No. 662/2009 addresses the kind of behavior parties must show during election campaigns, such as; respecting the constitutional order in general, other parties and their candidates, the electorate, the media, election administrators or other government bodies. In a nutshell, the proclamation only addresses the behavior that political parties must show and practice externally during election campaigns.

### **WHY INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY?**

The primary function of political parties is to link the citizenry with the government (Sartori, 2005, p. 1). If they are to effectively meet this responsibility, parties must adhere to the institutional guarantees such as IPD (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011, p. 3). Political parties have to provide equal opportunities for effective participation for party members and leaders in the party's decision-making processes. Unlike any other forms of association, the need for democracy in political parties is stronger because parties are prospective institutions which could form the parliament and run the government at state level. This is different from what used to be the case in older democracies, where parties were considered private voluntary associations. The German Basic Law explained that political parties and their participation in the political process are in the interest of fulfilling the political will of the people (Basic Law, 1949, Article 21 (1)). More specifically, the German Party Law defines political parties as associations freely established to perform a public function (Political Parties Act, 1967: section one and two). For that reason, parties' internal functioning is strictly regulated in

Germany both under Basic and Party Law.

The relationship between parties and democracy should reflect the parties' adherence not only to democratic goals and actions but also to internal democratic structures (Mersel, 2006, pp. 87-88, 97). Yigal Mersel further argues, likewise the absence of a legitimate political goal, democratic deficit in political parties should cause the ban or dissolution of parties. This is because, he argues, there is interdependence between political parties and democracy. A political party, which does not commit itself to democratic values internally, cannot logically hope to form democracy at state level. A party, which is intolerant of difference internally, cannot normally hope to respect oppositions in the wider political realm (Teorell, 1999, p. 375).

The German Constitutional Court on its 1952 ruling on the constitutionality of the neo-Nazi *Sozialistische Reichspartei* also stated that there is logical relationship between the concept of free democratic order and the democratic principles of party organization (Schneider, 1957, p. 536). A political party which proscribes democratic deliberation of ideas has a fractured base from to compete for and occupy state power. These kinds of parties face a risk of disintegration. The risk of disintegration resulting from undemocratic internal functioning of parties is particularly critical as these parties assume state power. For that reason, internal party democracy is regarded as reflective of the ability of the party in question to form a robust, cohesive and stable government at state level. Again, internal democracy allows for free deliberation of ideas, which may have positive effects on the representation of ideas of the electorate and may strengthen the organization by attracting new members and creating space for fresh ideas (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011, p. 3).

Moreover, in any constitutional democracy where democracy, accountability and transparency are proclaimed fundamentals of the system, political parties cannot become exceptions to disregard democratic values in their internal functioning. These fundamentals should give the state legitimate ground to impose external regulation on party democracy in the absence of clear constitutional provisions empowering the state. Last, but not least, relates to the importance of party democracy to nurture the culture of democracy both within the political party and on parties' relationship with the outside world and at societal level at large. Forbidding dissenting opinions and deliberation, factionalism, discrimination among members, imposition of candidates and all sorts of parties' malpractices reinforces the pattern of weak culture of democracy at both state and societal level.

In the continent of Africa, where democratic culture is scant, intra-party democracy is thought to have the potential to promote the culture amongst both political parties and the society at large. In such polities, where levels of civic awareness are extremely

low, intra-party democracy provides opportunities to expand civic education and awareness through participation, while at the same time devolving power and decision-making processes to broader sections of society (Maiyo, 2008, p. 23). In Africa, political parties are perceived more as instruments of assuming public office than institutions of democratic consolidation; intra-party democracy is more likely to improve the overall effectiveness of the party against its competitors (Maiyo, 2008, p. 23).

Some argue that IPD could weaken the power of a party's inner leadership and make it difficult for that party to keep its electoral promises (Scarrow, 2005, p. 4). Furthermore, it is argued that internal democratic procedures may raise possibilities for party splits and crises, possibly harming democratic stability. The arguments in favor of party democracy are pretty convincing, but a one-size-fits-all approach to IPD may not work. The benefits of intra-party democratization depend on the specific instruments used, as well as the implementation methods and interaction with the political context (Mimpen, 2007, p. 2).

### **REGULATING POLITICAL PARTIES FOR IPD**

Political parties were treated for a long time as private associations which were entitled to compete freely in the electoral marketplace and determine their own internal structure and process (van Biezen & Piccio, 2007, p. 1). As a result, regulating how parties must behave and function internally was considered very much outside of the state's mandate. In consequence, state regulation was thought to be a contravention on parties' internal affairs; and a restraint against political pluralism (van Biezen & Piccio, 2007, p. 1). In countries such as US, United Kingdom and Australia, regulation is still considered against the liberal understanding of parties as non-state agencies (Gauja, 2006). In the US, although the constitution makes no mention of political parties, the Supreme Court has ruled that freedom of association is not absolute; and states can regulate certain aspects of political parties, including their internal government structure and nominating process. This remains the case as long as they can demonstrate an interest in the regulation that corresponds to the severity of the burden imposed (*NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson*, 357 U.S. 449 (1958)). Political parties in the US and the UK are particularly regulated by the Campaign Finance Law of Congress in relation to the money they are provided by the state. In Australia, only the state of Queensland has adopted intra-party democracy regulations. The need for greater transparency and accountability through party laws in Australia is being discussed (Gauja, 2006).

A fear of reprisal from past despotic regimes and communism, like in the case of Germany and Finland respectively (ACE, 2008, p. 2), have fostered people's



discontent about the behavior and performance of parties (Mersel, 2006). The introduction of state financing of political parties (van Biezen & Piccio, 2007, p. 28) necessitated and encouraged a regulatory regime on parties and their behavior both internally and externally. The need for party regulation has now dominated the understanding regarding their role in political process. There is an increasing demand for party regulation from politicians, partisan, policy makers and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (van Biezen & Piccio, 2007, p. 28). Vince Commission, for instance, emphasized the need for IPD regulation without undue influence on parties as free associations to ensure proper functioning of parties in democratic societies (European Commission for Democracy through Law, 2010, p. 25).

Countries, appreciating its importance, have shown an increased interest towards regulating parties and their internal functioning. To be sure, although regulation is important, by itself it cannot ensure IPD in the internal dealings of parties. Establishing a potent enforcement system and a body which watches over the activities of the political parties and takes corrective measures is equally important. Problems related with enforcing regulatory provision, for instance, are reported as prevailing in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria due to weak enforcing institutions and dominant party leaders (ACE, 2008, p. 3).

Regulation of party democracy can be implemented in different ways. It can be made both for content and form. In terms of regulating content, laws may stipulate or require parties to guarantee certain rights for members. In terms of form, laws may regulate parties to follow certain procedures or adopt a certain internal organizational structure. Regulations could take the form of positive and/or negative kinds of regulations. The positive regulation is by way of incentivizing parties which uphold some behaviors required by the state (ACE, 2008, p.1). This kind of regulatory scheme is usually made to encourage parties to ensure equal participation of underrepresented groups such as women. The most widely used regulatory scheme is “a negative regulation” by way of demanding parties to act according to a certain prescribed procedure or behavior and if not enforcing certain legal responsibilities to be upheld.

In their analysis of regulation of IPD in the European countries, Van Biezen and Piccio (2007, pp. 38-39) have observed a variety of forms of regulation. In some countries, party democracy is regulated by way of generally requiring political parties to abide by principles of democracy in their internal functioning and leaving the details for them to address under their internal rules. Others, on the other hand, have regulated party democracy through stipulating specific democratic principles and procedures which parties must abide by, whilst dealing with their day to day internal business. These include; guaranteeing the specific rights of members, stipulating specific procedures for decision making, justly selecting party leaders, nominating candidates



as well as specifying the kinds of organizational structure parties must adopt and the manner and purpose party funds must be spent. Countries such as Finland and Czech Republic have more stringent regulations; party democracy is provided as a precondition for party formation (van Biezen & Piccio, 2007, pp. 38-39). A party which wishes to register must show that it will apply democratic principles in its internal functioning. Also, in the Czech Republic, political parties with undemocratically elected leaders and undemocratic statutes are unqualified for both establishment and operation. Regulation of internal party democracy may be carried out based on both the constitution and other laws.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL REGULATION OF IPD**

Due to the consideration of political parties as free institutions, constitutions were not a source of party regulation laws for a long time. This is still true for the constitutions of older democracies. A good example is the US constitution which is now more than 200 years old. The US Constitution is devoid of a provision mentioning the word political parties let alone any provision regulating party democracy. The same is true for the constitutions of older democracies in Europe such as Denmark, Belgium, Ireland and the Netherlands (van Biezen & Piccio, 2007, p. 31). Following the constitutionalization of political parties and party democracy in Germany in 1967, 28 European countries now have a constitution which addresses political parties.

In Africa, the Nigerian and Kenyan Constitutions can be cited as examples of where constitutional recognition of parties and party democracy is accorded (ACE, 2008, pp. 2-3). Beyond acknowledging the role of parties in the democratic process, the Nigerian Constitution has provided specific regulatory statements on internal party democracy (ACE, 2008, pp. 2-3). It, for instance, requires political parties to undertake periodic and democratic elections of its leadership.

The Constitution of Kenya, which is often cited as representing the fourth wave of African constitutions (Hessebon, 2014), has addressed political parties in much greater depth and in a separate section (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Part three of the constitution provides a list of requirements for political party formation and requires them to practice democracy and abide by principles of good governance internally. It also empowers the parliament to make laws to further regulate political parties in both their internal and external behavior.

Apart from the constitutional laws which often provide the principles, states may also make other laws regulating parties' internal behavior and practice in detail. These laws are generally referred to as "Party Laws" which usually include: party registration law, electoral law, campaign finance laws and party code of conduct laws.

## CONCLUSION

As a consequence of the critical role that parties play in democracy, party regulation in general and IPD regulation in particular are essential in ensuring an effective participation of political parties in the electoral process. In Ethiopia, political parties are regulated on their behavior and activities externally rather than their behavior and activities internally. Internal matters are left to the parties' discretion rather than state imposition. From the constitution to other subsidiary laws, internal functioning of political parties is left unregulated in Ethiopia except on few instances: rights of members and use of party fund. While securing parties' independence on internal matters is appropriate, state regulation remains important on matters that have a bearing on the overall democratic processes. Internal party democracy is among the institutional guarantees likely to create vigorous political parties capable of playing a meaningful role in the democratic processes. On the flip side, regulation is critical to implement internal party democracy.

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## Modernity, Democratization and Intercultural Dialogue in Ethiopia

Fasil Merawi<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Understanding the parameters, essence and implications of modernity in the Ethiopian context is a difficult task. By its very nature, modernity is a highly contested concept which is associated with the triumph of subjectivity, exercise of rationality and the realization of human freedom and emancipation. It is in such a critical praxis that modernity tries to implant its tradition, custom and authority. Rather than developing a broader understanding of Ethiopian modernity, there is too narrow a focus on political modernity conceived as centralization with regard to the emergence of the modern Ethiopian state. Alongside these lines, intellectual discussions regarding the essence and function of democracy in Ethiopia situate democracy as a solution to the problems of centralization and cultural assimilation and, hence, a way of accommodating cultural differences. Democratization is here analyzed from the perspective of popular participation, power relations and empowering individuals in making decisions. What is neglected in such attempts is the need to understand democracy as a normative orientation, value reference and philosophical problem. After discussing the ambiguities found in defining Ethiopian modernity, this paper argues that a more elaborated understanding of democracy in Ethiopia could be developed by appropriating key lessons from a recent orientation in philosophy known as intercultural philosophy. The various concepts to be studied here include; dialogue, polylogue, mutual enlightenment and learning amongst diverse cultural backgrounds.*

**Keywords:** Philosophy, democracy, dialogue, modernity, centrism

A great deal of controversy surrounds intellectual attempts at characterizing the dynamics of political, social, economic and other relations in modern Ethiopia and their implications for state making, democratization and systems of administration. Trying to characterize Ethiopia's history with conventional categories like the thesis of colonialism dictating African history or a historiography that appeals to a universal

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path to human history is a problematic task. As such, there is a need to study the contingent, local and specific factors that are unique to Ethiopian history. This failure to arrive at a strict understanding of Ethiopian history in general and defining the essence of modernity in Ethiopia in particular arise from the existence of different religious worldviews, cultures and languages in Ethiopia. existence of a unique process of state formation and cultural dynamics also negates Rather than being uniformly dictated by the colonial legacy like most African nations, Ethiopia continues to occupy a special place in the African context. The modernization theories according to which modernity is a material phenomenon and the embodiment of instrumental rationality. This shows that “Modernization cannot result from the total assimilation of Africans, the condition of which is the complete extirpation of their historical past” (Messay, 2004, p. 115). Local responses to the introduction of foreign ideals and cultures are diverse in the Ethiopian context. Whereas the attempt to evolve a model of Western cultural resistance and seclusion characterize Ethiopia’s response to Western influence, “the rest of Africa has been set in a colonial mold and are the result of non-African ideas and conventions” (Silberman, 1960, p. 141). Such a historical stature served to establish Ethiopia’s status as the source of black pride, self-affirmation and decolonization.

Although there is a debate regarding the essence of Ethiopian modernity, an argument is ongoing that the political project of modernity in Ethiopia could be situated in processes of state making, centralization and emergence of a highly homogenized population. Based on this, absolutism and centralization are identified as the key features of the modern Ethiopian state. For historian Saheed A. Adejumobi (2007), the nature of cultural encounters and historical image in today’s Ethiopia are as a result of two major factors. On the one hand, in the political dimension, one witnesses a gradual evolution from an agrarian and feudal system into popular forms of governance. On the other hand, there is a search for a model of governance that accommodates diversities in culture, societal dynamics, politics and other aspects of the life of the individual. Alongside these lines, using the modern Ethiopian state, democracy in Ethiopia is situated in terms of the politics of identity, realizing equal participation and creating space for the participation of individuals, different groups, worldviews and cultural identities in public life and decision making. Against such an insistence, the philosophical dimension of democracy emphasizes the normative presuppositions of respect, accommodation, pluralism and dialogical encounters. It shows the need to understand democracy from a normative perspective.

The aim of this paper is to make a plea for the introduction of a value orientation and intercultural dimension in the discourse on the nature, function and viability of democracy within the Ethiopian context. In section one, I will try to demonstrate how the conventional understanding of democracy in Ethiopia is founded on the

understanding of the political project of Ethiopian modernity as a process of centralization and the emergence of the absolutist state. In section two, I will discuss intercultural philosophy and the issue of democracy and dialogical encounters. Finally, in the third section, the benefits of intercultural philosophy in the Ethiopian context will be explained in terms of a critique of ethnocentrism and dialogical encounters in order to initiate a process of mutual learning amongst different cultures.

## **METHODS**

The paper is grounded on a philosophical discussion and a conceptual analysis that seek to explore the discourse on Ethiopian modernity, political modernity, intercultural dialogue and democratization. To this extent, I will rely on a discursive analysis that seeks to explore the discourse on modernity, identity and popular participation. The paper, as such, is founded on a study of secondary data and literature bearing upon the nature of Ethiopian modernity, democratization and intercultural philosophy. The paper uses a philosophical method of deconstruction where one seeks to expose binary operations and structures that underlie our understanding of reality. Applied to the discourse on modernity, I will deconstruct the foundations of the Ethiopian discourse on modernity with an aim of exposing their impacts in our understanding of democracy in contemporary Ethiopia.

## **DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE PROJECT OF POLITICAL MODERNITY IN ETHIOPIA**

In the current context, realizing the equal participation of citizens in the affairs of their community, creating a space for the participation of different identities, popular participation and instituting a democratic establishment are identified as some of the major tasks facing the Ethiopian state. Democracy could be conceptualized as a form of government which realizes the voices of citizens either in a direct or indirect form of participation. Such a quest is founded on the discourse on modern Ethiopia, which is seen as highly centralized and absolutist. Still, addressing the following questions is difficult to summarize: What is Ethiopian modernity? What are its historical origins? What is its lasting impact?

For Teshale Tibebe (1996) Ethiopian history and culture are considered anomalous and paradoxical. In the isolationist image, Ethiopian culture represents a secluded, separated and unique culture characterized by an internal growth separated from alien influence. Related to this, for the romantic image, aesthetic refinement of everyday life, purity and perfection characterize the Ethiopian culture. This is further developed by the civilization image for which “Ethiopian civilization, majestic and exotic, hibernated throughout its long history, lost in the entanglement of geographical

isolation and hostile neighbors” (Teshale, 1996, p. 417). Furthermore, in the Adwa complex image, Ethiopia is seen as a source of African pride and root of Pan-African aspirations, in the barbarism image as a communalistic, religious, culturally oriented and materially underdeveloped culture and for the black colonialism image, as a nation of cultural exclusion and dominance. In the arrogance image, Ethiopia’s cultural resistance to outside influence and the inability to modernize and catch up to the advancement of the West are emphasized. Finally, in the pan African image, Ethiopia “symbolized the hope and pride of Africa” (Tibebu, 1996, p. 426). For Tibebu, there is a need to situate such historical images within the context of African history.

In observing the quest for modernity in Ethiopia, Paulos Milkias (2008) argues that the logical consequences of Ethiopia’s quest for modernization stemmed from the Western system of knowledge, education and cultural awareness that seek to dismantle the feudal system and find discomfort with the realities of the Ethiopian condition. Currently, in the globalized era, it is time to face the implication of such a quest in the antagonism between modern scientific and traditional localized systems of knowledge. From the outset, there was a failure to recognize the antithesis between feudalism and modernization. As such, “feudalism and modernization are by their very nature incongruous and cannot live side by side without creating fissures in the body politic” (Paulos, 2008, p. 91). Grounding itself in the transition from the church to public schools as agents for the dissemination of knowledge and education, being modern in Ethiopia constituted a minimal role of the church and a growingly important role of secular institutions. Thus, “the image of the new political order was drawn in terms of a new ideology: Zamanawi-seletane (modernity), which meant modern institutions, modern schooling and modern thinking” (Teshale, 1996, p. 93). Even the genesis of modernity in Ethiopia for Paulos signified overcoming religion and tradition and is clearly evident in the modernization project of emperor Tewodros. As Paulos remarks, “not only was Tewodros anti-clerical, but he saw the development of Ethiopia as going necessarily against the influence of the church” (Teshale, 1996, p. 94). Thus, the grounds for the struggle between tradition and modernity also took the form of education and the dissemination of knowledge.

There is a need to situate the discourse of modernity in existing realities. As such, understanding modernity requires situating modernity in social, political, value-oriented and economic aspects. For Andreas Eshete (2012), starting from its genesis, modernity has been an ambiguous project causing controversies centering on questions of; To what extent is modernity a clear departure from pre-modern times? How did it propagate the exercise of individual freedom, when did it start and where? Based on this, Andreas argues, “I doubt that either the key originating elements can be definitely singled out or when it first made its appearance can be fixed with finality” (p. 10). Furthermore, most conceptions of history are dictated by the myth of historical



progress and history as a linear path of enlightenment. Andreas argues that the project of modernity stands without recourse to metaphysical systems and cumulative visions of history and one could salvage the notion of modernity as declaring the arrival of the unique present and exercise of subjective rationality to examine the human condition. Thus, the visions of modernity “can exist in the absence of any commitment to grand narratives about the course of human history” (Andreas, 2012, p. 11). In heralding the prospects of modernity, Andreas also cautions against the other side of modernity manifesting itself in asymmetrical power relations, economic inequality, racism and destruction of human life. Andreas believes that the mottos of justice and solidarity and critique of the feudal order are the manifestations of the Ethiopian discourse of modernity. The precursors and multidimensional features of the Ethiopian discourse of modernity are witnessed in diverse conduits such as the written philosophy by Zera Yacob, the Dekike Estifanos, economic modernization propounded by Gebre-Heywat Baykedagn (Andreas, 2012, p. 21) and the political project of modernity that Ethiopian rulers introduced serving bureaucratic, material and technical considerations. The most radicalized manifestation of Ethiopian modernity finds expression in the Ethiopian student movement which questions ascribed status, hierarchical relations and envisions equality, justice and freedom guided by socialist principles. Thus “Socialism was championed because it would serve the aspiration to bring about modernity by revolutionary means” (Andreas, 2012, p. 22). A second major gateway to modernity found expression in the aesthetic movement of modernism that is less conceptual and more practical and focused in the transient and suppressed. A large continuum didn’t emerge between the student movement and modernism and such movements have not “prompted change in the institutions and practices of the practical world” (Andreas, 2012, p. 25). Comparing the impacts of the student movement with the aesthetic movement of modernity, it is the former one that planted the seeds for societal transformation, whereas the later was highly conceptual and abstract.

Witnessing the political project of modernity in Ethiopia as centralization and cultural assimilation, democracy is situated in the politics of recognition and equal participation. Furthermore, there is an attempt to institute a system of federalism that realizes the needs of nations, peoples and nationalities. Although in the Ethiopian context, the colonial thesis cannot explore or fully capture the nature of cultural contact and interaction, internally the introduction of a monarchical regime, common trade routes and religious rivalry have exerted a significant influence over the cultural dynamics and encounters. The relations amongst cultures were ones of trying “to intermarry and establish commercial links as well as to unite against common enemies and of course, to fight with each other for regional primacy” (Alemseged, 2004, p. 593). Such a moral fabric and ethos of interdependency persisted throughout modern Ethiopian history. Still, going beyond a homogenization of cultures and also a secessionist path



which abandons a common cause, one must further promote “the reign of civic nationalism over ethnic nationalism” (Alemseged, 2004, p. 614). Clearly articulating the nature of modern Ethiopian history seems to be a difficult task. On one hand, there is a unionist cause which in tracing Ethiopia’s long historical past situates the cultural encounters as setting the stage for a common identity, societal solidarity and striving for a common cause. On the other extreme, there is an attempt to underscore relations of hierarchy, exclusion, superiority and inferiority dictating cultural encounters and dynamics in the Ethiopian context.

Against the argument on assimilation and dominance of one cultural group and identity, some argue that modern Ethiopia is founded on a power politics that favored the elite and nobility rather than a specific cultural identity. Such critics “posited that rather than a monopoly of one group, the system was based on elite integration and was open to all with proven military, political, or administrative skills” (Tefaye, 2005, p. 59). Looking at the dynamics of power relations, historical transformation and cultural integration in modern Ethiopia, Tefaye identifies three major periods that exerted a lasting impact on the power dynamics. These constitute feudal economy, communist ideology and federal state structure. This shows that “each stage involved unique state-society struggles” (Tefaye, 2005, p. 70). It is based on such historical trajectory that equal participation is situated as the ultimate solution to the politics of identity in Ethiopia.

Generally, the historian Alemseged Abbay (2004) characterizes the quest for recognition and politics of identity in Ethiopia as revolving around assimilationist, secessionist and accommodation policies. He locates the assimilation policy in processes of centralization and modern state building that were initiated by Emperor Tewodros’ program of modernization. Secessionist paths emerged as a way of challenging the status quo, introducing the causes of a group and quest for recognition. Being fueled by familiarity with ideas of secularism and modernity, an attempt was made to challenge assimilationist policies. Here, “the intelligentsia and the nascent middle class produced by Ethiopia’s exposure to modernity had to determine whether sub-nationalisms bound to pass from their benign level to a malignant stage inter-communal bickering had to veer towards settlement or confrontation” (Alemseged, 2004, p. 599). In between the centralized and local, assimilationist and secessionist policies, Alemseged locates an accommodative option that seeks to balance the cause for ethnic identity with state building, by giving groups and identities the ultimate power to decide on their belongingness to a political entity. Once we have situated contemporary discussions of democracy in Ethiopia within Ethiopia’s discourse of modernity, let’s consider the vitality of approaching democracy from a perspective of a philosophical analysis of cultural encounters based on the intercultural orientation in philosophy (Wimmer, 2002, 2007; Mall, 2000).

## DEMOCRACY AND THE IDEA OF INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY

As a notion and ideal the modern conception of democracy has ancient origins. On the dominant Western narrative, its origin can be traced to ancient Greek city states and the emergence of a form of administration where the people as a whole directly participate in the affairs of their society (Sterba, 2001). Still, there is an attempt at creating a Western conception of democracy driven by capitalist economy and the virtues of liberalism. Such an effort redefines the very notion of development driven by capitalism and is universalistic, consumerist and instrumentalist in its orientation. Thus, “in contrast to the past, when traditional knowledge was typically seen as an obstacle to development, it is now claimed by some that this is pivotal to discussions on sustainable development resource use and balanced development” (Brouwer, 1998, p. 661).

In today’s world, the existing forces that animate the need for a democratic establishment arise from the complexities of the world of globalization and its political, social, economic, moral and other challenges. In such a world, the ideals of multiculturalism and intercultural participation serve as driving forces for introducing the rights of the subaltern and the discarded into the world of neoliberal market economy. Such a world also witnesses the reemergence of fundamentalism, extremism and nationalism that challenge the existing bounds of the state, local cultures and domestic economies. The sociologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (2000) witnesses the re-emergence of the religious dimension of human life in the growth of Islamic

[...] fundamentalism in Turkey and some Arab countries, by Muslim diasporas in Europe and in the United States, by various Jewish groups, and by Evangelical movements in the United States and Latin America; and, secondly, the emergence of national-communal movements in south and south-east Asia, India, and Sri Lanka. (p. 4)

This necessitates a quest for a normative order and political ideal that can address the challenges of today’s global societies. Beyond competing ideologies and diverging visions of the state, democracy in today’s world is a question of crises in human values, evolving a platform for a discourse on issues of common concern, recognizing diversity in different walks of life and the politics of recognizing and expanding the horizon of Western modernity to different parts of the world. As such, what poses a new ground for conflict in the contemporary world is the rise of “multiple (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 4). I will focus on a philosophical orientation of intercultural philosophy that has the potential to introduce a discussion of values, cultures and processes of mutual learning in today’s conceptions of democracy and the search for a political ideal that can realize an equal participation of diverse cultures and identities.

In the world of philosophy, intercultural philosophy originated as a way of questioning Eurocentric tendencies that situate Western modernity as the genesis and culmination of human civilization and progress. Hand in hand with a critique of absolutistic claims, intercultural philosophy also tried to create the space for affirming different cultures and initiating a process of mutual learning. Amongst others, the Indian philosopher Ram Adhar Mall (2000) situates the practical necessities that animated the need for intercultural philosophy and the intimacy of culture and philosophy in the quest for understanding ‘the other’ in general. Here, it is the universal implication of the modern project and the search for what ultimately underlie diverse grounds of truth, which initiates the intercultural search for truth. Such a quest involves cultural, philosophical, religious and other forms of aspirations. Mall claims that in terms of philosophy, beyond particular associations of the philosophical quest, first philosophy glances at the universal. Mall argues, “The general concept of philosophy possesses a universal connotation over and above its particular, adjectival qualifications, such as Chinese, Indian, European and so on. This connotation gives us the right to speak of inter-culturality” (Mall, 2000, p. 1). What are the implications of inter-culturality for cultural equality?

As Mall puts it, philosophical efforts are not just abstract concepts devoid of a particularities, but culturally oriented realizations, which try to resituate the universal within the particular. Here, trying to prioritize one culture over the other in the name of pure universality neglects the contextual aspects of all human knowledge. Alongside these lines “there is almost no philosophy that can claim to be fully free from influence” (Mall, 2000, p. 2). In terms of possible cultural encounters and relationships, Mall claims that cultures must be constructed as the locus of dynamism enclosing a process of give and take where learning is at a center stage. In highlighting the limitations of an isolated conception of a culture, Mall adds that such a position is not rationally validated or practically applicable and that it instills relations of asymmetry in the world. As such, intercultural philosophy situates itself as a critique of an ethnocentric rationality which sacrifices everyday centers of learning for pure abstraction. Hence, “any attempt to examine cultures as a closed system is philosophically and methodologically unsound and even politically dangerous because it may lead to the ideology of “culturalism” which ascribes to a hierarchical gradation of cultures and treat others as a means to an end” (Mall, 2000, p. 2).

As the Austrian philosopher Franz Martin Wimmer (2002) establishes it, if truth is situated in its nature than in what ways are the insights of different cultures communicated? This could be used to utilize individual insights as a way of glancing at the universal. Possible responses to cultural encounters have to do with two extremes; one looking for a universally valid logic upon which to scrutinize individual cultural achievements and the other one limiting all cognition to the particular. Wimmer

claims: “There are two possible ways out of this dilemma; one is to search for a single method of reasoning that goes beyond every cultural conditioning [...] the second way out is to cultivate ethnic particularities and calls that philosophy” (Wimmer, 2002, p. 14). The specific solution that Wimmer upholds includes a polylogue as a modification to the nature of dialogue. Whereas a dialogue occurs amongst two equal partners, apolylogue is a process of learning taking place amongst multiple centers and partners which have equal voices.

The contemporary radical interpretation which questions Western hegemony is, for Mall, an all rounded approach being conducted from different sites and perspectives. The first aspect of the interpretive analysis highlights the general picture in which Western society’s understanding of its place in the emblem of existence is formulated. In a sense, the West gets to glance in its own practices as well as guiding precepts. The second aspect exposes Western conceptions of other cultures and communities. The philosophical degradation of other cultures and the ideological justification for Western supremacy are included. This is followed by the non-European conception of its own existence and contributions to universal civilization. Finally, the state of analysis also includes the questioning and understanding of the European in the eyes of the suppressed non-European. As Mall claims “this new hermeneutic situation also bears the label of a fourfold hermeneutic dialectic. First is the way in which Europeans understand themselves. Second is the European understanding of non-Europeans. Third is the way in which non-Europeans understand themselves and fourth is the way non-Europeans draw a picture of Europeans” (Mall, 2000, p. 3). Regarding the goal of intercultural philosophy, Mall makes it clear that it is inspired by the need to affirm the uniqueness and novelty in the intellectual edifices of the other culture. Thus, it stands against the attempt to impose one’s own constructs on the other and exclude others from the realms of interaction. To this extent, only an “analogous” hermeneutic empowers the other by respecting its uniqueness and individuality. Whenever there is a methodological limitation in uncovering the thoughts of the other, the strategy must rely on understanding similarities across various cultures. The intent is not reducing but tolerating the other in a mutual search for the truth. As such, “analogous hermeneutics does not demand the identity of views for for understanding” (Mall, 2000, p.3).

Wimmer (2007) characterized the spirit of intercultural contact as taking four possible forms or modes depending on the process of learning and relations of inclusion and exclusion. The first model of expansive centrism assumes that the one superior culture which possesses the highest possible wisdom possesses a moral right to disseminate such insight by any means necessary (Wimmer, 2007, p. 56). Secondly, integrative centrism laminates the idea that only one center is good enough to be imitated by others. Here, it is not the superior culture that initiates the conversion but the inferior others in the quest for clarity and progress. Thus, “one’s own way

could be thought to be attractive to such a degree that it would be self-sufficient to attract and integrate others” (Wimmer, 2007, p. 57). Thirdly, in multiple centrism, the essentially different nature of each culture is affirmed, such incommensurability, in the end, inhibiting any process of learning whatsoever. Finally, in tentative or transitory centrism, truth is situated as a quest for different centers of learning; each provisionally enlightening the other.

According to Mall’s understanding of intercultural encounters amongst various cultures, the possible encounters revolve around three major vistas. In a sense, the particular response that a given culture develops in intercultural encounters determines its conception of the other. The first possible reaction is found in retreating further into one’s own culture and engages on a deep cultivation of Indigenous ways of being. Here, affirming one’s uniqueness is a way of indirectly discriminating the values of others. Secondly, another response resides in simply resisting others and possible forms of influence. Finally, the spirit that intercultural philosophy tries to foster is found in considering others as equal partners and developing a set of guidelines as well as practical approaches, which yield a process of learning. As such, “there is no doubt about the cultural embeddedness of philosophy, but this embeddedness does not mean the loss of the universalistic application of the generic concept of philosophy” (Mall, 2000, p. 4).

One way in which the mutual search for truth is endangered in intercultural encounters is found in being a fundamentalist towards one’s own values and degrading the values of others. Accordingly, the need to revisit the supremacy of a given philosophical tradition must be coupled with questioning the prioritization of one culture over another. Such an interpretive situation in intercultural philosophy resists subsuming the other, is tolerant, mutually entertaining and analogous in its nature. Thus, “it approves of overlapping centers, searches for them, finds them and cultivates them” (Mall, 2000, p. 6). In terms of the general goals that it tries to envision, intercultural philosophy for Mall entails a broader accommodation of diversity from philosophical, political and pedagogical perspectives. In terms of its philosophical aspect, intercultural philosophy questions the dominance of one’s philosophy over the others and specially the prioritization of Western philosophy over others. This is followed by a theological encounter across various conceptions of the divine resulting in diverse and tolerant theological aspirations. Then, through its political lenses, intercultural philosophy is interested in a participatory and symmetrical power structure that equally utilizes the voices of diverse centers. Finally, in its pedagogical centers, intercultural philosophy tries to install a gradual process of learning for the realization of a truly accommodating universe of discourse. As such, “one of the main reasons for the destructive character of cultural and religious (and even political) encounters must lie in the claims of exclusive truth made by certain cultures. Absolutistic claims are, by nature, violent”

(Mall, 2000, p. 8). Rather than prioritizing one center, outlook and horizon over the other, intercultural philosophy envisages a process of mutual learning. In comparing the basic tenets of intercultural orientation in philosophy to the multicultural one, Mall argued that an intercultural search for underlying similarities offers a better alternative to multiculturalism's advocacy of an isolated and frozen identity. Refusing to acknowledge dynamism as the nucleus of a culture and cultural interactions, multiculturalism necessarily confines a culture to fixed ways of being. Accordingly, "those who overrate identity cannot avoid becoming formalistic, exclusivist, or even fundamentalist" (Mall, 2000, p. 9). In a world where Western practices and supremacy are being questioned and the viability of a general narrative is being undermined, Mall asserts that truth, although situated in a tradition, must not be confined in it.

One major step towards mutual understanding is questioning any form of tendency that only prioritizes the one over the many, the false universal over the truly diverse. In such a world, intercultural thinking questions the attempt to trace individuality to an ultimate origin, explaining others only in our terms and hierarchical gradations amongst cultures. In the final analysis, although an individual philosopher aims at the universal, such an inquiry is made possible by focusing on the particular. Thus, "an intercultural oriented philosopher" is sometimes needed to effectively face a dilemma. He or she cannot do good intercultural philosophy with centrism and can do no philosophy without a center. I have considered this paradox and have the following suggestion; to have a center does not necessarily mean to be centristic" (Mall, 2000, p.18). Once the basic tenets of intercultural philosophy are analyzed, let's identify their applications in Ethiopia.

### **APPROPRIATING INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY**

In the previous sections, I tried to situate the current discussions on democracy in the Ethiopian context within the Ethiopian understanding of political modernity. I also argued that democracy in today's world must take into consideration the challenges of the world of globalization. To this extent, the idea of intercultural philosophy and different sites of knowledge were entertained. I will try to draw some key lessons from the idea of intercultural philosophy in terms of resisting eurocentrism, realizing dialogical encounters and processes of mutual learning amongst cultures.

Intercultural philosophy helps to resist ethnocentrism or the idea that only one's cultural background and outlook is superior and paramount compared to others. It helps to develop a critique of cultural models of asymmetrical relations. Intercultural philosophy also helps to develop a dialogue amongst different groups, cultural identities and forms of thought. It fosters a mutual understanding on issues of common concern. Mutual learning and identifying common structural patterns could also be

facilitated by intercultural philosophy. As we have seen in Ethiopia, the process of state building and cultural dynamics is dictated by the existence of a greater diversity in terms of language, ethnicity, religious ties and other particular ways of being. Furthermore, past attempts to find a space for the articulation of cultural diversity have not succeeded in developing a common cause and thereby either abandoned cultural identities in the process of state making and national identity or, on the other extreme, propounded particular causes that set to undermine the need to strive for a common agenda.

Celebrating pluralism, intercultural philosophy helps a multiethnic polity like Ethiopia in numerous ways. Standing against expansive centrism, it critically undermines the attempt to disseminate the values of one culture at the expense of others. It also exposes reductive attempts to subsume other cultural outlooks into one's own cultural construct and integrative centrism, which assumes that I argue that certain similarities could be exhibited between the federal state structure and intercultural orientations in light of recognizing diversity. As we have seen, intercultural philosophy develops the idea of truth being found in each center and, hence, resists the supremacy of one culture and subsequent hierarchical relations between cultures. Recognizing both universal and contextual aspects, it tries to envision a mutual dialogue amongst different centers. Only one's cultural outlooks are good enough to be imitated by others. In Ethiopia, attempts to analyze cultural encounters and dynamism must be founded on commonly shared structural patterns that emerged during Ethiopia's long historical past and served as a source of societal solidarity and as a foundation of social cohesion. Furthermore, in studying cultural diversity and dynamism in Ethiopia, one needs to be critical about a generalization of specific cultural practices in a general framework. As the anthropologist Data De'a remarks regarding the study of diverse cultures on a given context, deep relations and connections must be underlined over manifest appearances like inhabiting a same physical space. Again, in studying the nature of cultures, "the analysis must not be concentrated only on macro level realities, but also what is the one fabric that holds individual identities together in a similar scale" (De'a, 2000, pp. 164 - 167). Dena Freeman (2000) supports such an argument on identifying the diverse aspects of affirming general diversity. As such, subsuming differences under a general platform as if they belong to a collectivity, leads into the suppression of individual cultures in practice. Freeman argues about the dynamism of cultures, "Movement and flux are pervasive at every scale, leading to shared ideas, group and clan relations and cultural innovation. It is this dynamic aspect of culture that we find fascinating" (Freeman, 2000, p. 20). Thus, one must refrain from conceiving Ethiopian cultures as closed systems that are immune to mutual learning and participation. Intercultural philosophy could also be understood as a supplement to the federal structure's advocacy of empowering different levels of administration.



In federalism, the power of each constitutive unit in the process of political legitimating is developed. Without losing autonomy, regions are being integrated into the federal structure. As a consequence, forms of authority are realized in the agreement between federal and regional arrangements. Federalism could be situated as a response to the challenge of diversity and different modes of life. It is a general devolution of power that leads into the coordination between units. This also finds expression in intercultural philosophy's search for different symmetrical sites of knowledge.

As we have seen, intercultural philosophy develops the idea of truth being found in each center and, hence, resists the supremacy of one culture and subsequent hierarchical relations between cultures. Recognizing both universal and contextual aspects, it tries to envision a mutual dialogue amongst different centers. I argue that certain similarities could be exhibited between the federal state structure and intercultural orientations in light of recognizing diversity. First, both federalism and intercultural philosophy are responses to diversity in terms of culture, geography and modes of life. Still, federalism is a state structure and intercultural philosophy a critique within the philosophical discourse. Secondly, both of them emerge as a critique of absolutistic power relations, federalism challenging the unitary state structure and intercultural philosophy, the absolutist tendencies of the Western culture of philosophy. Thirdly, in both of them, analysis and power are envisioned in contextual and general levels; in federalism, realized in federal and regional levels; and in intercultural philosophy, in different sites of knowledge and the universal aspect of the human experience. Finally, both of them set the equal participation of cultures and identities as a goal.

In trying to identify the cultural dimensions of federalism in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian philosopher Andreas Eshete (2010) argues that, despite the existence of cultural uniqueness and differences in Africa and in Ethiopia in particular, cultural pride and the essential worth of cultures are still not affirmed. Thus, he asks, "what explains the prevailing disposition in Africa to look askance at federative ideals, among them: recognition of cultural pluralism and identity; collective rights, including national self-determination?" (Andreas, 2010, p. 1). He further assumes that conceptions of modernity must be supplanted with ideas of equality of cultures and that one must expose the ideological manipulation of cultural diversity in the African context. In the Ethiopian case, Andreas Eshete believes that historical consciousness must be taken as an ingredient for the federal experience. As such, one must identify what it is within Ethiopia's history that animates federalism. Thus, "to champion the political freedom and equality of all cultural communities [...] was to call for the emancipation of many whose cultures and identities had been scorned and their land and labor forcibly taken by those who belonged to the politically privileged culture" (Andreas, 2010, p. 9). Federalism in its stance towards cultures affirms oneness and simultaneous differences, reciprocal relations and a give and take ethos.



Intercultural philosophy helps to instill an element of pluralism since it recognizes the equal importance of all cultures, exposes relations of superiority and inferiority and looks for processes of learning amongst different cultures grounded in a shared experience and cultural contact. It also treats cultures as dynamic units gradually changing to accommodate inputs from the environment and other cultures. Here, intercultural concepts of analogous hermeneutics, tentative centrism and polylogue (Wimmer, 2002, 2007) could be used to guarantee the equal participation of cultures in creating a present-day reality in Ethiopia. As we have considered, the challenge in intercultural philosophy is the need to develop an orientation that resists the idea of one superior culture and which recognizes the situated nature of truth and aims at strengthening the insights of multiple partners conceptualizing the universal. Using such concepts as centrism and polylogue, we could emphasize the need to expose relations of hierarchy in Ethiopia's historic past coupled with an affirmation of equality in the present scenario. Cultures must not prioritize themselves over one another and a mutual dialogue on the Ethiopian condition centering on existential issues of development, social problems and understanding should be promoted. Based on this, for the realization of the Ethiopian cause, the mutual participation of different cultures is a necessary task. As Wimmer showed, the major challenge in cultural encounters is the fact that one culture tries to interpret others using one's own terms. The solution lies in recognizing and conversing with different modes of life. Again, the integrative approach only establishes one's own way as the path to be followed by others that will eventually imitate it. Finally, a separative centrism also depicts a world of interaction where each culture, focusing on its own integrity develops a secluded orientation. Wimmer claims "the main task of the various centers in this view will consist in the conservation of their respective identity and heritage and in the differentiation from other traditions" (Wimmer, 2007, p. 4). In the final recourse, it is the interplay amongst different horizons and cultural origins that leads into intercultural participation.

## CONCLUSION

Discussions of democracy in Ethiopia focus on power relations, politics of identity and equal participation. This is predicated on Ethiopian modernity conceived as centralization, assimilation and cultural superiority of one group. What is neglected in such discussions is the normative, ethical and value oriented conception of democracy. Taken from the angle of intercultural participation and relations, democracy could also be situated in terms of dialogue, mutual affirmation and enlightenment. Here, intercultural philosophy emphasizes analogous hermeneutics, polylogue and mutual quest for the truth. As such, the lessons of resisting ethnocentrism, dialogue and mutual learning could be derived from intercultural philosophy.

In the Ethiopian case, the uniqueness of cultures; forces that serve as catalysts for

cultural integration as well as discontent, must be identified. This can only be situated in a normative framework that treats all cultures as embedded, situated and recognizes the symbiosis between Ethiopian modernity, cultures and processes of modernization.

Applied to the relations amongst cultures, intercultural philosophy emphasizes the concepts of polylogue and mutuality. This is based on the exposure of grand claims to truth, which yield hierarchical relations amongst cultures. Whereas expansive, integrative and separative centrism added to a reductive, hermeneutics conceptually negate the other and practically enslave other cultures; the solution lies in situating truth as a dialogical search residing in both the objective and relative experience. Within the Ethiopian context, intercultural philosophy helps to resist ethnocentric attitudes that envision hierarchical relations amongst cultures, posits a model of cultural pluralism and instills a dialogical encounter amongst cultures and a process of learning based on analogous hermeneutic and underlying structural patterns.

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## Hope for Tomorrow through Street Children Dialogue

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### Abstract

*This interview highlights the work of the local Gondar Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Yenege Tesfa (Hope for Tomorrow) in its attempt to include the most vulnerable members of society – orphans and street children – in discussions about their needs. While many of Yenege Tesfa's activities in offering vulnerable neighbors homes, financial support, education, medical care or jobs-skill training are well perceived in Ethiopia, their program "Street Children Dialogue" is less known. By reaching out to street children and making their voices, concerns and opinions heard, Yenege Tesfa intends to enhance political representation of street children and the participatory culture of democracy in Gondar's streets.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, discussion, vulnerability, street children, Yenege Tesfa

Discussions on democracy and representation tend to focus on institutions, politicians and state administrators. This interview looks at ways in which the Ethiopian NGO, Yenege Tesfa, gets street children actively engaged into discussions about their situation, needs and prospects. Since 2001, Yenege Tesfahas has been working to provide homeless and/or parentless children in Gondar with more and better opportunities. This includes providing homes for more than 400 children, as well as access to education, health care, counselors and vocational training. The approach is holistic and is based on an empowerment strategy. The goal of the NGO is to increase skills, capabilities and capacities for a self-determined brighter future. The founder and manager of Yenege Tesfa, Nigisti Gebreslassie, explains to political scientist Sonja John about the practical aspects and theoretical prospects of the NGO's street children dialogue.

**Sonja John:** What was the idea behind initiating the street children dialogue?

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**Nigisti Gebreslassie:** In Gondar, we always have hundreds of children living on the streets. Some live separate from their families, others do not have any relatives. Living on the streets means that they are in a very vulnerable position. They face multiple challenges and problems but society at large does not listen to them. They also do not have a safe place where they can go to discuss their experiences. We invite them to sit together and thus empower them and themselves to discuss their problems and how they might find possible solutions.

**Sonja:** Who attends the meetings?

**Nigisti:** They are mostly boys aged between fourteen and eighteen. There are not too many girls living on the streets.

**Sonja:** What are the most common reasons as to why children who have family choose to move out?

**Nigisti:** It is mostly poverty related. Another reason is caused by divorce or other forms of family disruption. In many cases, there is a lack of family planning resulting in families with many children. Some parents are not able to support all their children so some of those children have to leave the house.

**Sonja:** How often do they meet?

**Nigisti:** We offered the dialogue sessions once a week. But not everybody can attend each week because they also have to work. So, they decided to meet every second Saturday. Our social workers and mobile school teachers organize the meetings since they are already working closely with the street children. The children know that there is someone there who they can trust and that is very important. The social workers guide them but do not judge them. We also feed them and show movies or provide them with other forms of entertainment.

**Sonja:** Who is setting the agendas for the dialogue sessions?

**Nigisti:** The children themselves set the agendas. When we started with the dialogues, we gave training to who we call street leaders. We trained them to lead these meetings. We do not bring them any certain topics or a set agenda. They are the ones who develop the agendas and prioritize the topics. We do not interfere in the dialogue unless there are grave misunderstandings. Once they talked about HIV and that it can easily be transmitted by sharing a meal or sitting together. The social worker clarified that but usually we do not interfere; the social workers are only there to listen in. It is the goal that the children talk to each other. Usually they share their experiences regarding safer places to sleep and safer sleeping arrangements. They come up with the topics because we do not have the experience; they are the ones who live on the

streets and have gained experience and knowledge in these situations. They know the problems that they face and are more likely to come up with good ideas.

**Sonja:** Which topics do they discuss during the meetings?

**Nigisti:** They discuss different topics. They are mostly about how to survive in the streets despite not having food, not having clothes, not having a place to sleep or how to avoid sexual violence. They also discuss prospects on how to have a better life, possible ways to get education and income and information about support systems. It is difficult to find solutions individually and that is why we bring them together so that they can share how they go through their lives now and what they can do to attain better lives.

One topic that reappears has to do with pedophiles or other forms of sexual violence and abuse. They either have experienced it themselves or know someone who has. But it is still one of the most difficult situations to deal with. They do not know if they should report it to the police or ignore it. They do not trust the police because often they are not treated nicely by them. If a son is beaten, he can turn to his parents for help. But orphans and street children lack this support system. When they go to the police, they are perceived as being the source of the problem and mostly no one will be charged. When our boys reported being raped to the police, the police did not believe them. So, the children do not have any confidence to talk about it because they may get treated as the problem, not as a victim who deserves justice.

**Sonja:** How does Yenege Tesfa react to what they hear?

**Nigisti:** We advise them, for example, not to go to motel rooms. We have different activities for them. We take them to formal schools and provide them with information on how they can enrol. We also give them life skills training to open perspectives about a different future. We try to help them realize the solutions that these trainings could bring about.

**Sonja:** What are the solutions that they have brought to your table?

**Nigisti:** For example, some of the boys said that they want to work. They may not have a formal education but they want to be useful and earn some money. They are willing to work as shoe shiners or vendors in the streets. We also trained some to make and sell bracelets, earrings and other handicrafts. We also encourage them to save some money, not to spend everything that they earn.

**Sonja:** Where do street children save money?

**Nigisti:** They can save it with us. We keep the money and the bank books safe for them.

**Sonja:** The street children are growing, hopefully outgrowing their situations. How long do the children stay in the dialogue sessions? Is there a high turnover?

**Nigisti:** We have many boys who always come but also new boys join us. We also see the improvements in their lives. Many now attend school every day although they are homeless. Others used to be homeless but now have a street business and can afford a bed somewhere. After a while, they get the idea that they have gained all they can from the dialogue sessions and that they know how to take care of themselves. If they do not come back to the dialogue sessions, we try to reach them through our social workers and encourage them to stay in school, save money and participate in some of our trainings.

**Sonja:** Will there be a graduation at some point in the dialogue sessions?

**Nigisti:** We do not call it a graduation but they get a sense of becoming experts when, after so many months, the same topic may come up again and they have discussed it before and can give advice to the newer members of the group and empower them.

**Sonja:** What is your conception of empowerment?

**Nigisti:** We focus on different aspects of empowerment but usually start with psychological empowerment. Living in the streets involves experiencing trauma. We provide counselors and also provide perspectives on different ways of living. They should not focus on having problems but ways by which to overcome these problems and to embrace opportunities, to grab them. We also believe in the importance of self-empowerment. In the street children dialogue sessions, we offer an open and safe place where they can share without anyone judging them.

Working with the children is very rewarding because once they trust you, they give you their all. They are so loyal and appreciative. Once they trust you, it is so easy to communicate with them. The positive energy you give them will be spread by them in the future.

**Sonja:** Do you forward the needs expressed by the children to decision makers?

**Nigisti:** We write their needs up as part of a report that we share with the government and our sponsors. But we do not advise the government on what to do, give recommendations or express demands. I think the city government is just overwhelmed with the many problems within the community so that they just leave certain topics to NGOs to deal with. It could also be the case that they believe social issues are solely in the realm of NGOs. For example, the Women and Children Affairs Office could work closer with us but all they do is select children to place with us based on the criteria and project descriptions we give them. That is all they do. No prevention,

no information, no city social workers in the streets. Even for serious problems like pedophiles that we brought to their attention and made recommendations about, they refused to deal with it claiming it is a taboo in our society. I understand our tradition of not addressing taboos and keeping controversial subjects out of conversation but I also see that it is killing us inside. We need to open up. The children have a right to be protected by the government. The first thing in solving a problem is to acknowledge that there is a problem. Street children are citizens too and the government has a responsibility to care for them. They cannot leave all social problems to NGOs and religious institutions.

**Sonja:** Is the city administration involved in informing the public about some of the issues that the street children have to deal with?

**Nigisti:** Not really. For example, people refuse to talk about homosexuality. Of course, hardly any homosexuals are pedophiles but this is a widely held misconception because people do not talk about sexual orientation. Nobody, really nobody in Gondar talks about homosexuality, gays or lesbians. For many people, it is a sin so you do not talk about it at all. Homosexuals are not able to talk about their desires. You can imagine the psychological and emotional stress involved. Even my own friends who are more progressive ignore me when I want to address this issue. They know that I am heterosexual but they tell me outright that they do not want to talk about this. Of course, our teenagers cannot mention their own orientation if it diverts from the norm.

**Sonja:** Democracy is about representation, participation and political decisions being made which equally benefit everybody's needs. How can we ensure that the street children's issues are also being heard?

**Nigisti:** I fear we are too far away from the decision makers. Everybody's voice should be heard but I do not see that in reality. People with little access to information and material wealth are not properly represented within our system of democracy. The government still has a lot to do in order to hear and represent every citizen. We still have a long way to go to combine the whole society as one. We try to serve as mediator between the most vulnerable members of society and the government. Right now, we are disappointed in the lack of responses to our reports. We provide directly for some immediate needs like shelter, food and advice. But the state policies need to change and that is something the government has to do.

**Sonja:** What are your future plans for the street children dialogue sessions?

**Nigisti:** We want to continue to create our own safe zone. We want to build a youth center or recreation center where the street children dialogue sessions and numerous other activities can take place. We are getting more children and also more children of



different age groups. Next year, we want to open separate groups so that the teenagers do not have to hold back when younger boys are in the room. We want them to be free to share whatever they want to talk about.

## Aspects of the History of “Queens of peace and co-existence”: the *dubarti* and their *qoti* in Jamma, South Wallo

Ebrahim Damtew<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*This study is about the prestigious institution of mothers called dubarti in Jamma wereda, South Wallo. The objective is to investigate the role of the dubarti in peace building. Sources for the research were drawn from primary and secondary data. The people of Ethiopia are considered as patriarchal, which means that males dominate the entire life system. Women, in such studies, are ascribed as the least participants, subordinate, victims and dependent on whatever homegrown institutions are in place. This general conclusion is misleading in a way that overshadows the immense contribution and role modeling activities of elderly women. For instance, the dubarti, whom I like to call “queens of peace and coexistence” were credibly recognized in various social issues such as conflict management. In summary, the dominant notion that Ethiopian women had been cultural victims rather than givers and builders of culture is a mere generalization that needs rethinking.*

**Keywords:** Dubarti, coexistence, conflict resolution, Jamma

Until very recently, the scientific community and political elites remained reluctant to recognize women’s competence for decision making and carrying out public responsibilities to the highest levels (Original, 2002; Eskedar, 2015). It is also believed that the introduction of Western democratic institutions in Africa served as a bringer to the fore of gender issues. However, studies on Indigenous societies in Africa such as Kenya and Tanzania, pointed out that elderly African women have held remarkable roles in those societies as agents of peace and coexistence (Snyder, 1997, p. 562).

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Such an experience was also true among various ethnic groups, communities and regions of Ethiopia. For instance, Jemila and his associates (2014) note that elderly women have indispensable roles in conflict settlement in different parts of Ethiopia. Wallo area is one of these regions where, in the past, elderly women exercised their societal leadership responsibilities in local courts alongside their male counterparts known as *abagars*. They shared in the societal wellbeing by managing peace and order, working on natural calamities, issues of fertility and ensuring the continuity of culture. These elderly women were called *dubarti* and were honored and adored by the community. A *dubarti*'s honor was not fully in place without their blessed stick which is called *qoti*. This was particularly true in cases where there was a conflict to settle in front of the contestants when the role of the *qoti*, a symbol of peace and blessing, was paramount. They also initiated prayers and the female spirit *atete* with their ritual symbol called *chele*. Scholars from various fields of study such as history, economy, linguistics, anthropology, folklore, philology and others studied various aspects of the people in the study area, South Wallo, where Jama wereda is found (Asnake, 1983; Hussien, 2001). The role of the *abagars* (Shimagle), which are agents of Indigenous conflict resolution, had been studied in some districts of Wallo (Birhan, 2002 A.M.; Meron, 2010; Netsanet, 1998 A.M.; Molla, 1999 A.M.). These passing references might not give a full picture of Indigenous conflict management strategies in Wallo as a whole as they totally neglected the role of elderly women in the making. The current study is an attempt to fill in aspects of those gaps in local history and culture. As far as the existing literature is concerned, up to now, no research has been conducted on conflict resolution in Jama wereda wherein the present study is focused. This study therefore aimed at exploring aspects of the historical roles of *dubarti* (elderly women) in conflict resolution in Jama wereda.

The method employed in this particular research is qualitative and used both primary and secondary data sources. Purposely selected knowledgeable elderly informants from both sexes were contacted for interview, during which leading questions prepared ahead of time and based on the objective of the study were used. The life stories of some informants were also included regarding *dubarti*'s role in the society. Oral history sources such as poems and sayings were also systematically included based on their content and themes to show how important traditions are to understand the subject being investigated.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This study has three major headings. The introductory section is comprised of a general background, methods, concept of conflict, conflict resolution and an overview of African and Ethiopian customary conflict resolutions. The second and the main part is devoted to sources of conflict in the study area, geographical and historical

description, conflict resolution institutions and mechanisms, the dubarti, elders in peace making, positions of the dubarti in the society and, finally, the paper contains precise concluding remarks.

### **THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT**

Studies on conflict provide different definitions and conceptual meanings depending on existing cultural settings. For example, Fisher (cited in Solomon, 2014) defines The Ethiopian experience is not an exception. It is a country of diversity with different conflict as “an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties” (p. 102). In addition, Birhan (2002 A.M.) defines conflict as part of human experience inevitable in all human interactions. Swanstram and Weissmam defined conflict as the outcome of antagonistic interest over resources of whatever kind (cited in Gonfa, 2014, p. 16). Gonfa further pointed out that “conflict is a situation in which two or more parties endeavor to acquire the similar scarce resources at the same time”. Similarly, Jemila (2014) proceeds in defining conflict as a disagreement of people due to differences in interest or ideology. She further elaborates her standby saying disagreement among people is a natural and unavoidable act that all humanity encounters in daily life.

Having such definitions and descriptions in mind, we can summarize conflict as a social friction of parties or individuals that arises from emotions or selfishness over resources or other factors. In contrast to the above descriptions, informants in the study area perceived conflict in a simpler and easier sense. For them, conflict has no meaning beyond the sense of “no peace no war“ between individuals or groups. However, conflicts of all kinds have something in common – requiring settlement. For settlement to be effective, prior knowledge of the local context and attitudes are indispensable (interviews with sheikh Ahmed, Hussien, Feleke, Alemu, 2015).

Conflict resolution, as a phrase, is perceived differently by different scholars. Some perceive conflict resolution as an activity which may include mediation, negotiation, reconciliation or arbitration (Meron, 2010; Assefa, 2005). Others consider conflict resolution as a process followed while resolving conflicts and focus on joint action to bring about acceptable solutions for all parties (Esayas, 2015; Gonfa, 2014; Jemila, 2014). Murithi (2006) states that conflict resolution is a means by which to create peace and rebuild social harmony between combatants. Accordingly, conflict resolution strategies can be divided into two – formal and informal – mechanisms.

### **AFRICAN CUSTOMARY CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

African societies have developed customary conflict resolution practices and ‘democracy’ (Joseph, 1999; Bahru, 2002; Yacob, 2002). In the continent, the idea and

practice of ‘democracy’ include: respect for elders, tolerance, coexistence, communality, mutuality, patience, self-control, moderation, open mindedness, honesty and hospitality (Murithi, 2006; Assefa, 2005). Studies have shown that modest families and other combatants rarely take their cases to formal courts (Murithi, 2006; Walelign, 2015). Elders are at the center of conflict resolution. This is because they are knowledgeable about the traditions and rituals and are thereby respected as trustworthy mediators.

The Ethiopisn experience is not an exception. It is a country of diversity with different languages, religions and nationalities whose unique cultural practices often overlap (Walelign, 2015; Bahru, 2002; Yacob, 2002; Getachew, 1998; Dejene, 2002). It is common to hear a popular saying which bears witness to the indispensable role of customary conflict resolution in the society: “Bad reconciliation is better than smooth litigation”. This applauds the significance of customary conflict resolution where parties are wholeheartedly encouraged by the tradition to forgive each other before the authority of peace. One cannot find himself or herself a winner or a loser. However, in the formal court system, there had been many injustices, such as perjury, nepotism and other related partialities. Although someone wins the case, the scar remains for the loser, therefore peace might not be long lasting. For this reason, many people in Ethiopia are not interested in the formal resolution system. Additional deterrents include; high costs, fears of corruption and prolonged time spans in waiting for decisions (interviews with Tafara and Reshid, 2015; Meron, 2010; Birhan, 2002 AM). So far, studies in Ethiopia witness that traditional institutions were and are still playing remarkable roles in matters that have always customarily belonged to them.

### **SOURCES OF CONFLICTS IN THE STUDY AREA**

Conflicts in Jamma, as elsewhere, may vary from minor interpersonal disagreements to a serious dispute which might eventually lead to homicide (interview with Hawa and Beshir, 2015). The most common reason for conflict in Jamma arises from land issues (interview with Hawa, Beshir, 2015). Almost all of the people of Jamma are farmers who live off farming and rearing animals. The main contentious issue is that of inheritance which, in olden days, manifested itself by court litigation, disagreements of husband and wife, denial of money between people, insult, theft, burning houses, killing and beating a man/woman (interview with Muzeyen and Feleke, 2015).

Geographically, the study area is located in the southern tip of the present day South Wallo Zone bordering with Mida, Gishie Rabel, Woreilu, Menz, Gera Midir Weremo, Laybet and Tachbet and Kellalla weredas. Historically, Jamma wereda is a melting pot of the region’s societies and languages, where coexistence and cross boundary of cultures and social lives are well entrenched and pronounced (interview with Hawa and Beshir, 2015; Hussien, 2001).

The people of Jamma are not exceptional in the strategies and established institutions that they use in conflict resolution. Their experience and traditions are similar with the rest of the country although there are some dialectical differences. As elsewhere in Ethiopia, the sacred trees, shrines and compounds of religious institutions, such as Churches and Mosques, are places where the elders meet to deal with conflict. In such areas of convergence, everyone is expected to speak only the truth (Esayas, 2015; interviews with Hussien and Beshir, 2015).

Conflict resolution has its own processes and procedures depending on the nature of the conflict. Some might be solved very easily and other may take more time to resolve. Historically, there were four types of institutions to settle larger scale conflict in the study area. These are ante (family council) for very brief and family conflict settlement, abbagars/shemagle/anddubarit (country judges) and the Mesal (visiting holy place of former saints). The shimagle institutions were and still are responsible for serious conflicts involving for example murder or blood feuds and those of spirit reconciliation (interviews with Hussien and Beshir; Ayelech, 2015). Dealing with each of these is not the objective of the study. Nevertheless, all were important institutions for conflict settlement and harmonious life amongst the study area population.

The dubarti were the “divine sources of blessing and fertility” and thus made up a sacred category of the society. Moreover, in Jamma, the term dubarti refers to the elderly and prestigious women of the society who were working together for the wellbeing of the community (interview with Asiya and Yesuf, 2013). The dubarti role in the customary cultural practices such as those related to conflict settlement is the one worth mentioning in this scenario. These are values related to morality, fairness, integrity, trustworthiness, respect for elders and traditions and the like. Councils of women elders such as the institution of dubarti were established to discharge responsibilities vested upon them in the society, particularly with regard to matters related to peacebuilding, environmental issues and fertility. The dubarti were culturally empowered. As will be highlighted, their activities and engagements were directly related to pacification or diversion of manmade and natural calamities imposed on the society in general. These elderly women go beyond their gandaa/neighborhood. Local evidence witnessed that their symbolic value was great for the society regardless of religion or ethnicity (interview with Ali and Damtew Worku, 2013).

They were considered as leaders of public prayers and as having a different spirit from other women of the society. It is the responsibility of the dubarti to mediate the female spirit atete for those women who celebrate the ritual ceremony. Other than their knowledge and skill of working for peace, they were called whenever natural disasters struck. The dubarti gathered together along the river bank or near the sacred

trees with other women to perform prayers coupled with ritual ceremonies. These factors all demonstrate the leadership role women elders had in defending their communities (interview with Muzeyen and Abolu, 2014).

### ELDERS INVOLVEMENT IN PEACEMAKING

Be they male or female, elders in the study area were respected and venerated for their tremendous engagement in society (interview with Muzeyen and Abolu, 2014).

Every matter of the society that needed critical evaluation was usually managed by these elders. Male councils of elders were usually called *abagars* or *shimagles*. Members of this council of elders were elected by seemingly free and democratic means by their respective villages. The *abagars* numbered more than three in any occasion of conflict settlement. Their number varies from three to seven whereas this number varies from three to five in the case of *dubarti* (interviews with Ayelech, Bizuye and Reshid, 2015). The below popular saying is about elders' competence and capacity in their knowledge, skill and attitude and overall knowledge of the culture and tradition.

In another instance, a popular proverb used in the community to express the position elders held in the society states: “ባለጌን በእርቅ ወይፈን ንበድርቅ” (offender with reconciliation and a bull with drought). Offenders are always dangerous for governance but they can be shaped towards peace with the persuasive words of the *shimagle/abagars* or *dubarti*. The same is true for a young bull which cannot be easily persuaded to plough. Hence, the dry season is good to shape and train than during times of abundance (interviews with Tafara, Bekelech and Ahmed, 2015). These councils of elders ruled the public in line with *yahagerquna* (the law of the land) sometimes named after founding fathers *Yaamariedembe*. When any sort of conflict, trivial or serious in nature, occurred in the community, the council of elders strove to settle matters in a peaceful way without harming any of the conflicting parties. The council of elders' requests that the disputants handle their problems by means of a set of expressions and sayings (interview with Bizuye, 2015). The *dubarti* with their *qoti* (blessed stick) persuade the victims by sharing experiences and traditions to come to terms. These statements in which their experiences are shared are very important as they illustrate the capability of elders in retrieving and rehearsing traditions for peace building. Here are some examples:

Do not forget the law of the land.

If you are out of it your fate will not be good.

You know it can dry a living tree not least a human being

Respect it just for peace

(Interview with Abebu, 2015).

As such, elders cite more articulate sayings which are persuasive enough to enable the message of the *shimagle* to be accepted “አገር መርቻም መረቻም ነው” (in the law of the land, you would win and/or lose). The law of the land belongs to everyone. It is not there to hurt some and favor the other. One of my key informants (Hussien, 2013) pointed out this ethos in the following way:

You would be penalized if you go against it and vice versa. If you are persuaded to accept the customary law, you must accept that you are not a loser. You forgive your combatant as per the custom. He/she must also do the same in front of the elders. You therefore take the riches of blessings for the good of your future.

The concept of customary laws and settlement procedures are indications of win-win strategy which is an aspect of refined ‘democracy’. My key informant (Yesuf, 2013) summarized what the *dubarti*’s have meant to him in the past in peace making amongst the public: “ዱበርቲዎች ዘንጋቸውን /ቆቲቸውን /ከደጃፍካቆሙ ይከበራል። ማንም አይተላለፈውም። አማራጭም የለም መታረቅ እንጂ። ዱበርቲዎች ልክ እንደ አበጋሮች ሁሉ የአገር አፍና ወኪል ስለሆኑ ተደማጭነት ነበራቸው።” (The *dubarti* were an important segment of the society as were *abagars*. Their *qoti* was also respected. They were the mothers of the land and the people).

Another important issue worth mentioning accomplished by the *abagar* was a swearing of an oath to finalize the agenda of warfare between parties. This is called “የጃማበሌ” compound term ‘Jamma’ as we have seen is the name of the study area *ebele* denotes an oath in the name of “Jamma”, the founding father of the land and the people. The oath can be “ጃማበሀሩይዋጥኝ” (May I sink in the sea of Jamma). This is a mechanism within the tradition to ensure loyalty for the land and the people of the study area. Someone who passed an oath in front of elders repeats it in order to prove innocence.

In the case of the *dubarti* “የነነየ ጀቦና ይፋረደኝ” (let the coffee ritual of elderly mothers [*eneneye*] pass judgment at me). Another oath sentence includes “ቃሌን ሳፈርስ ሰውነቴ ይፋረስ!” (If I failed to respect my words, I better die). An additional form of oath showing respect for the law of the land and the public is “ማን ይሙት!፣ ሀገር ይሙት!” (Who dies? The country dies!)

Swearing an oath in the name of a country, as we have seen above, has tremendous pressure on the oath performer. It has greater implications for the parties to come to terms and assures inevitable peace for the community. After long processes have been



gone through to reconcile parties, the elders used to bless in the following way to wish good things for the conflicting parties and for the country in general:

Let God please the land

Let God accept our call

Let the words be blessed....

(Interview with Bekelech, 2015).

As part of reconciliation, the *guma* ceremony was also very important in the study area. This ceremony involved compensation in terms of money or cattle for the dead family member in the case of homicide. The money paid for compensation was not derived directly from the killer's own wealth, however rich he was, he had to be chained and go from door to door to beg for money for compensation. This is to teach others that killing is inhuman (interviews with Reshid and Bekelech, 2015). For minor cases, such as beating other than killing, a gift called *qeq* for aiding the recovery of the wound is given. Informants rehearse two very telling couplets composed for singing where one tells about his or her feelings. The poems are associated with *guma* and express longing between two partners who were once in good partnership but later lost that relationship and wanted to resume what they had lost.

### ወንድ

እንደነህ እንደነሺ አንባባልም ወይ

ሰው ካባቱ ገዳይ ይታረቅ የለም ወይ

Wouldn't it be good if we greet each other?

It is clear that a man/woman reconcile with his/her father's killer.

### ሴት

ሰው ካባቱ ገዳይ የሚታረቀው

ባገር ሽማግሌ ጉማ በልቶ ነው (Ahmed, 2015)

A man or a woman comes into terms,

It is due to the work of the council of elders,

That the harmed party was compensated with *guma*.

The couplets carried valuable social lessons. The first thing is that for peace to prevail, round table discussion and communication between parties are important. The other thing that surfaced in the couplet is the notion of “win-win” in the combatant’s needs and interests. To enable this to be possible, there would be a revisiting of customary practices of conflict settlement based on the law of the land. “የበደለ ከሰ የተበደለ ተከሰ” (the harmer compensates the harmed). This ritualistic situation is known as *guma*. The role of the actors of the whole process is also mentioned in the couplets in one way or in another. As such, in both couplets, the fathers are duly acknowledged for their knowledge and skill in bringing about peace and harmony in the society. As the same time, it is also clear how deep rooted was their role in society.

### POSITIONS OF THE *DUBARTI* IN SOCIETY

A study of African society pointed out that “the woman was far from being excluded from power in black Africa. She took an important part in it, at least in certain societies” (Joseph, 1999, p. 144). Similarly, the cultural and philosophical position attributed to the *dubarti* within the study area are important in this regard.

The *dubarti* usually undertook many initiatives in the society. When they realized that peace did not exist in the community, that nothing was going right: people were ill, drought was continuing, the land no longer produced good crops, there were many deaths in the community, there were epidemics, a member of the community was suffering from or died of a serious disease and/or some members were experiencing difficulties linked to community life, a prayer or ritual might be held for the wellbeing of the country (interviews with Muzeyen and Abebu, 2014).

The *dubarti* had spiritual power that resided not only in themselves but also in their walking sticks called *qoti*. In some regions of Ethiopia, for instance in Arsi, this *qoti* was called *sinqee* stick. *Sinqee* is a symbol of Oromo women’s rights. According to Jemila (2014), the *sinqee* stick was given to a woman in order to protect her rights. The *sinqee* was traditionally used on a number of different occasions: it was the holders of these sticks who led prayers during special occasions. This was done when the community faced problems, such as lack of rain, infertility, disease among human and livestock and in times of political instability and war. Informants have due respect for the *qoti*, which I came to understand was due to the perception of its spiritual power (interview with Bekelech, 2015). The respect vested to *qoti* seems cultural and religious and is associated with the spiritual power of the *dubarti*. Local evidence pointed out that women are feared and respected because of their charismatic, kind personalities and knowledge of traditions. It was believed that women are religiously superior and are heard faster in the Kingdom of God as compared to men; something which explained their closeness to God. Women are closer to God because they are more humble, soft

and innocent. “Their spirits are with God”. These are qualities which are attributed to the fact that God listened more to women than to men and were amongst others articulated within the following belief: “What a woman blesses will be blessed, what she curses will be cursed.” If the wrongdoer does not accept his faults, the elders and the women could curse and place other social sanctions on the offender” (interviews with Mohamed Ali and Damtew Alyou, 2013).

The following poems and extracts act as witnesses for the institution:

ዱበርቲ ያልሸው ይሁን

ሳይዘገይ ያውም አሁን (Abolu, 2014)

May your payer heard in the kingdom of God, *dubie*

May the blessing of God come true now

As the center of the prayer, be it for blessing or curse, the *dubarti* used to sing a song with their own particular rhythm and melody to communicate with God the creator to hear them and to give them responses as per their requests and prayers.

### CALL FOR PUBLIC PRAYER

As leaders of society, the *dubarti* had various responsibilities beyond local affairs of peace making. This included invoking prayers for fertility, disease, natural calamities and other social crisis nationwide.

ልጄን ያለች አሁን ትመጣለች፤

ባሌን ያለች አሁን ትመጣለች፤

ሀገረያለች አሁን ትመጣለች፡፡ (Hawa, 2015)

A lady with concern for her kids’ wellbeing will join us soon,

A lady with due concern for her husband’s wellbeing will join us soon

A lady with concern for the country’s wellbeing will join us soon

It is customary to see prayers done in groups, spearheaded by the *dubarti* or *abagars*, under the sacred tree or along river banks or other vast areas in response to the ongoing crisis. In this case, irrespective of religion or any difference, the public joined together, forgiving each other for any disagreements. It is for this tradition that the above verses were composed and sung by *dubarti* in their leadership of the public in general and their female compatriots in particular.

It is with this togetherness in prayer that the eminent *dubarti* of the 20th century Jamma composed couplets to show their leadership, friendship and success stories in their prayers and winning peace and co-existence:

አንድ በሬ አይስብም ያለመቀኛጅ፤

ብርዘገን ሀሰን ጀንዩ ወዳጅ። (Interview with Hussien Yimer, 2015)

An ox cannot plough alone but with another partner

Likewise, Birzegen Hassen and Jenye Wodajo, Birzegen and Jeneto were close friends throughout their peacemaking process and prayers. They are remembered by this couplet in the study area. “An ox cannot plough without his partner similarly conflict or any other matter is not solved with one mind.” This reality prevailed in the works and the names of the above mentioned elderly women.

### RESPECT FOR THE *DUBARTI*

There are a number of instances that the public rejoices and shows feelings of respect towards the institution of the *dubarti* in social media including in Islamic religious songs and poetry called *menzuma* and in the secular music:

በእናቷዳበርቲ ባባቷ አበጋር

በለስየቀናው ነው ከርሷጋር ሚኖር (interview with Mahmud, 2015)

Her mother is *dubarti* and her father *abagar*

What a lucky one her partner in life is

In the above verse, the message rests on that she is blessed because she is the daughter of an *abagar* and *dubarti*. Since sons and daughters of such people are well informed about the humanistic values pertinent to social life, they become an asset to any family.

የወሎ ዳበርቲ ደጋጎቹ መጀን

በነካካው እጅህ እኛንም ፈርጀን

The wallo *dubarti*, the righteous

May God bless us in their line.

የዳበርቲ ልጅ የሀገር እናት

እኩል የምታይ ያምላክ በርከት (interview with Mahmud, 2015)

The son of the *dubarti*, the mother of all people

The *dubarti* on whom the blessing of God rest,

There is justice in their endeavors.

In the above two couplets, God is mentioned in addition to the sacred and blessed personality of the *dubarti*. With the work of the *dubarti*, there are also contained the blessings of God – proving their power and legitimacy. As such the issues of fairness, justice and righteous are depicted clearly to the *dubarti*. That is why praising and well thought out couplets are shared amongst the community and beyond.

### Case 1

My name is Hussien Endeshaw. Now, I'm close to 80. I was born and grew up in Jamma wereda in a village called Gauagurie. We knew details about the institution of *dubarti*. They were recognized peacemakers. I remember what the Emperor did in thanks for their blessed work in society. That could be considered as recognition. The elderly women selected to *dubarti* membership were forerunners in every aspect. *Allah*, the creator, is also with them. Whatever they did was accepted by everyone regardless of religion or ethnicity. They showed their cultural power against offenders with their calls for peace. I remember their prayers and blessings for peace and societal wellbeing. (Interview with Hussien, 2013)

### Case 2

Falaka Gesit, one of my key informants, added his knowledge on the tradition of *dubarti*. Above all, he remembers the following issues. He said:

I'm native to Jamma and grew up here. I do not know any place in the country other than this region. I remember phrases which govern the community irrespective of religion or any other initiation. The blessed ritual of *eneneye Jebena* (coffee pot of elderly mothers) was the reference for everyone to prove innocence or to show that someone is honest and trustworthy. The ritual practices of the *dubarti* usually governed the land more than government soldiers or police force that are considered as locusts and appeared only for limited times and left things without solving them from the root of the problem. (Interview with Falaka, 2015)

### Case 3

Another important experience on the *dubarti* tradition comes from one of the grandsons of the renown *dubarti* women in Jamma wereda, from a village called Debreguracha.

*Eneneye* Birzegen Hassen is my grandmother. She was known for her work

as a mother of peace and other societal leadership roles. Her prayers and blessings were respected by everyone. She was there for everybody, above all for the country. In addition, she was a spiritual leader in society. Instead of local lords, it was her who won the emperor's admiration practice of conflict resolution alongside with her valuable local knowledge and the practice of ancestors, tradition and spiritual remedies. Emperor Hailesilassie I gave her five *gasha* tracts of land in response to her public service to live on. (Interview with Ali, 2013)

## CONCLUSION

Customary conflict resolution practices are important components of the life philosophy of the people of Ethiopia. Elders with deep knowledge of the traditions and oral utterances are the guardians of values relevant for peace making and round table discussions. The female role in peacemaking is rarely examined in Ethiopia, although the country has a rich culture of 'democratic elements' at the grass root levels. This study therefore attempted to show aspects of the multiple roles of elderly women in the building of humanistic values in societies and in peacemaking. Women have been integral actors on issues of societal importance. They were givers and guards of values for co-existence. It is fair to argue that women elders were symbols of fertility health, wellbeing and thereby an enemy of poverty, insecurity unemployment and misfortunes. Mothers, as indicated in this study, were custodian of customs, laws, morality, forgiveness, humanity and teachers of the young and on whom society based their humble character and practice. The *dubarti*, with their *qoti* for instance, were actively involved in mediation amongst warring factions within the family and the community. They were at the center of conflict resolution rituals and acted as peace envoys; a position which is conventionally given to male elders. They also led the communities in prayers against natural calamities and infertility.

The study also tried to inculcate the characteristics of customary conflict settlement which is based on empathy, cooperation, shared destiny and for giving and receiving. It is the researcher's belief that revitalizing and studying such institutions with contextual dimension along with contemporary development could play a pivotal role in social development. The issues raised should be promoted and incorporated for policy formulation and further research should be carried out with a view towards incorporating the traditional conflict resolution practices into a formal system of peacemaking and democratization.

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## List of Informants

Name of Informant	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remarks
AbebuTareke	77	3/11/2014	Gobenti	She has a very good memory of <i>abagar</i> and <i>dubarti traditions</i>
Abolu Mohamed ( <i>ato</i> )	85	12/6/2014	Tuludida	He had <i>dubarti</i> relatives in the imperial time and shared his rich knowledge of the role of the <i>dubarti</i> in the larger society.
Ahmed Seman ( <i>sheikh</i> )	90	3/2/2015	Kayafar	He was the <i>qadi</i> (judge) in Keyafer kebele and shared his memory on <i>dubarti traditions</i> .
Alemu Gesit ( <i>ato</i> )	85	1/4/ 2015	Buqasa	A farmer well-informed on the traditions customary to conflict management.
Ali Harun ( <i>ato</i> )	90	12/12/2013	Gebre Guracha	His grandmother was one of the renowned <i>dubarti</i> in the imperial era. He shared his rich memories with us.
Asiya Endeshaw ( <i>w/ro</i> )	82	11/8/2013	Guagurie	She has a rich knowledge of the customary rituals of conflict resolution.
AyelechTareke ( <i>w/ro</i> )	80	4/6/2015	Keyafar	She has detailed knowledge on the traditions and customary laws.
Bekelech Gulenti <i>w/ro</i>	87	5/6/2015	Jengeto	She has much to tell about <i>dubarti</i> traditions in the region.
Beshir Yimer ( <i>ato</i> )	57	4/8/2015	Jengeto	He has tremendous memories from his father on the role of <i>abagar</i> and <i>dubarti</i> in the study area.
Bizuye Yesufe ( <i>w/ro</i> )	89	1/7/2015	Meserbo	She has a good memory for local history.

Damtew Alyou (ato)	89	4/1/2013	Keyafar	He shared his memories on customary conflict resolution.
Damtew Worku (ato)	79	5/1/2013	Gende Mitad	He shared his thoughts on the law of the land.
Feleke Gesit (ato)	89	4/6/2015	Jibgurie	He has sharp memories about local history including the <i>dubartis</i>
Hawa Seid (w/ro)	72	4/6/2015	Mojjo	She is well informed of <i>dubarti</i> and <i>abagar</i> or <i>shimagle</i> practices.
Hussien Endeshaw (ato)	85	1/2/2013	Guagure	He has good memories about local history events. He shared his valuable memories on the <i>dubarti</i>
Hussien Yimer	56	6/8/2015	Degolo	He has shared what he inherited from his father on <i>dubarti</i>
Mohamed Ali (ato)	48	2/12/2013	Gondar	Originally from Jamma, he shared his rich memories on <i>dubarti</i> .
MuzeyenAman (w/ro)	88	7/12/2014	Yejerti	She shared her rich memories on traditional customary conflict resolution.
Mahmud Damtew (ato)	38	6/12/2015	Jibgurie	He has good memories about customary conflict management.
Tefera Feleke (ato)	56	7/12/2015	Degolo	He is well informed about the <i>shimagle</i> council called <i>Yagerabat</i> .
Reshid Bahru (ato)	74	8/12/2015	Keyafer	He shared his father's diary on traditions and Yejama <i>Bele</i> .
Yesuf Endeshaw (ato)	81	10/12/2013	Guagurie	He has a good memory on <i>dubarti</i> roles in society.

## The ‘Democratic Developmental State’ in Ethiopia: Origin, Challenges and Prospects

Tewelde Gebremariam<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Some scholars argue that the democratic transition of the successful developmental states of the East Asian countries is exceptional and that it is difficult to replicate this model in other countries, including Ethiopia. In view of such fundamental concerns, this paper asks whether Ethiopia qualifies as a democratic developmental state. What is a ‘democratic’ developmental state? What are the different features of a democratic developmental state and how can it be distinguished from developmental states? What are the challenges and obstacles that have stood in its way to becoming a “democratic developmental” state? The study employed a qualitative historical review of the democratization process since 1991 in Ethiopia. Results indicated that since 1991, Ethiopia, by its nature of politics and historical legacy (civil war) had to start with both democracy and development simultaneously. However, there is growing pessimism about Ethiopia consolidating democracy. Currently, Ethiopia is in a political crisis due to leadership incompetence; inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy; skewed emphasis on economic growth rather than development; poor human rights records and repressive measures on media, civil society and political parties. Thus, the government of Ethiopia should take lessons and revise its ‘developmental state’ to make the country more democratic, inclusive and participatory.*

**Keywords:** Developmental state, democratic developmental state, Ethiopia

With the emergence of economic success stories of undemocratic nations in East Asia - followed by unprecedented development with stagnation of formal democracy - debates had been raised as to which should come first - democracy or development (Leftwich, 1996a; Sen, 2000; Edigheji, 2010). Despite the ongoing disagreements on the concept of development, political science scholars like Adrian Leftwich (1996a) argue that what matters in development is not a form of government but “the politics that generates and sustains that state” (p. 5). Even though there is a positive

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relationship between democracy and the wellbeing of nations, achieving democracy depends on the character and capacity of the state (Leftwich, 1996b; Edigheji, 2010). However, other scholars like Sklar (1996) and Sen (2000) insist on the universal value of democracy as the best alternative to authoritarianism, by arguing that “[...] the method of dictatorship has never been as developmental in their effect as those of democracy” (Sklar, 1996, p. 29). Supporting this claim, the Economic Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen argues that “there is little evidence that authoritarian political system actually helps economic growth” (Sen, 2000, p. 15).

The pioneer developmental state thesis scholar Chalmers Johnson, who initially reported the ‘Japanese Miracle’ argues that “[a] state attempting to match the economic achievements of Japan must adopt the same priorities as Japan. It must first of all be a developmental state” (Johnson, 1999, p. 37). In contrary to Chalmers Johnson, scholars from the school of liberalism argue that the democratic transition of the successful developmental state of the East Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are exceptional and that it is difficult to replicate their model (Levy & Fukuyama, 2010; Edigheji, 2010).

This is because the historical and political ‘path dependency’ of countries matters in succeeding state-centered development (Levy & Fukuyama, 2010, p. 16). In comparison, since the 1990s, with the third wave of democratization and collapse of the Soviet Union, there was hope that African countries were in transition with the end of some authoritarian and dictatorship regimes (Matfess, 2015, p. 182). Nevertheless, only a few consolidated democracies and most African countries remain characterized by underdevelopment (Edigheji, 2005).

However, these prominent developmental states of East Asia have been in transition and have consolidated democracy in order to sustain their development and become democratic developmental states. But, according to the South African political scientist Omano Edigheji, in Africa, with the exception of Botswana, Mauritius and currently South Africa, there has been limited success in democratization (Edigheji, 2005, p. 1). Likewise, after 17 years of war, in 1991, Ethiopia had to initiate both democracy and development simultaneously so as to consolidate peace, democracy and development (Alazar Kebede, 2012; Bekele Sehen & Regassa Tsegaye, 2012). However, the democratization process is facing challenges in Ethiopia and there is growing pessimism in light of the challenge of consolidating democracy and, at the same time, sustaining the unprecedented economic growth achieved in the past decade (Arriola & Lyons, 2016).

Therefore, this paper raises the question as to whether Ethiopia qualifies as a democratic developmental state. What is a ‘democratic’ developmental state? What are the different features of democratic developmental states and how can they be

distinguished from a developmental state? What are the challenges to the “democratic developmental state’ in Ethiopia? In answering these questions, this paper relies on a qualitative historical review of the democratization process in Ethiopia since 1991 and the challenges in integrating the developmental state paradigm with democratic processes. Literature reviews on democratization in Ethiopia are used as a source of data by relating these with the theoretical foundations of the democratic developmental state generated by theorists (Leftwich, 1996a, 1996b; White, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Bagchi, 2004; Edigheji, 2005 and 2010). This theoretical foundation could illustrate the trajectory of democracy in Ethiopia while identifying possible policy measures with which to consolidate democracy.

The first part of this paper focuses on the origins of the developmental state and democratic developmental state and their respective distinct features. This is followed by an analysis of the historical trajectory of Ethiopia’s democracy from its post-civil war (1991), to its first ever seen democratic practices in the 2005 election and the subsequent repression of democratic institutions. Following this, the current challenges related to the ‘democratic developmental’ state in Ethiopia are discussed, wrapping up with conclusions and recommendations.

### **ORIGIN AND CONCEPTS OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

According to Amiya Bagchi, “the only developmental state to arise in the nineteenth century and survive into the late twentieth century was the Japanese Developmental State” (Bagchi, 2004, p. 30). The concept of a developmental state has been introduced with the success stories of the East Asian countries with the works of distinguished American political scientist, Chalmers Johnson, during the 1980s. Chalmers Johnson “invoked the concept of ‘developmental state’ to characterize the role that the Japanese state played in Japan’s extraordinary and unexpected post-war enrichment” (Johnson, 1999, p. 33). For him, the developmental state model in Japan was different from the American (capitalist economies) and Soviet (socialist economies) ones (Johnson, 1999, p. 32). Adrian Leftwich (1996b) widely defined developmental states as:

[...] those states whose internal politics and external relations have served to concentrate sufficient power, authority, autonomy, competency and capacity at the center to shape, pursue and encourage the achievements of explicit developmental objective, whether by establishing and promoting the conditions to economic growth, or by organizing it directly, or a varying combination of both. (p. 284)

In short, it can be defined in terms of “its ideological orientation (i.e. promoting the ideal and agenda of developmentalism) and its institutional arrangements (i.e. its institutional capacity to formulate and implement its policies and programs)” (Bekele

Sehen & Regassa Tsegaye, 2012, p. 5).

Except for post-war Japan, most of the prominent and successful developmental states like Korea and Taiwan have been under authoritarian rule. Gordon White (1998) categorized developmental states as state capitalist, intermediate and state socialist. Apart from China, most socialist developmental states ended with the end of the socialist block, including the developmental state in Russia (Bagchi, 2004). The dominant type of developmental state appears to be the capitalist developmental state (Leftwich, 1996a; White, 1998). The capitalist developmental state also has been categorized into two main types: democratic and non-democratic. This paper emphasizes the democratic variant but in order to ensure greater understanding of the development state; its major features are discussed below.

### **MAJOR FEATURES OF A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

Chalmers Johnson argues that “the first element of the model [developmental state] is the existence of small, inexpensive, but elite state bureaucracy staffed by the best managerial talent available in the system” (Johnson, 1999, p. 38). The small number of elite in the policy circle as well as dominant national figures act with commitment, determination and capacity to bring about economic growth and transformation, allied with leaders, all the while remaining relatively uncorrupted. These characters were evident in Korea under General Park Chung Hee, Singapore under Lee Kwan Yew or Botswana under Sir Seretse Khama. These elites were nationalists who also faced internal and external threats that forced them to strengthen economic development (Leftwich, 1996b).

The second common feature of the developmental state is a relative autonomy of the state and its institutions from any internal and external forces. Here, state autonomy means the state ability to achieve relative independence or ‘insulation’ from an influence of interest groups in favor of national interest. This does not mean an isolation of the state from society, rather “[...] autonomy of the well-developed bureaucracies is embedded in a dense web of ties with both non-state and other state actors (internal and external) who collectively help to define, re-define the implementation of development objectives” (Leftwich, 1996b, p. 286). To Johnson (1999), in developmental states “the legislative and judiciary branches of government must be restricted to ‘safety valve’ functions” (p. 38).

In addition to this, the autonomous state capacity “depends on the [...] presence of substantial institutional coherence in the constitutional arrangement for the distribution and use of political power among different sections of the bureaucratic apparatus, and in the nature of party systems in political society” (White, 1998, p. 30).

With the assets and presence of the above two features -determined elite and relative state autonomy-, it becomes possible for an emergence of competitive powerful bureaucracies with authority to plan, direct and shape development without external influence.

The common examples stated by Leftwich (1996b, p. 286) are MITI in Japan, the Economic Planning Board in Korea, the Economic Development Board in Singapore and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in Botswana. According to Leftwich, what makes these planning institutions (he called them ‘economic high commands’) different from other developing nations’ institutions is their “real power, authority, technical competency and insulation in shaping the fundamental thrusts of development policy” (p. 286). Likewise, as per Amiya Bagchi (2004), the developmental state should have “rational bureaucracy and the spread of the wings of the state over all the citizens it claims as its members” with disciplined bureaucrats (p. 7).

In development states, civil societies should not be abused by the state (Johnson, 1999, p. 52). The role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) might be insignificant in the time of developmental state as in the case of Botswana or destroyed or controlled by the authoritarian as in the case of Korea, China and Indonesia. The ‘weakening’ of CSOs was a means by which to consolidate the developmental state” (Leftwich, 1996b, p. 287).

After all the power, authority and relative autonomy are established and consolidated at the early stage of modern development, the states secure their national interest to enhance the capacity of these states to deal authoritatively (Edigheji, 2005). This is because their aspiration is based on “catching up with the advanced world by breaking out of the dependency path that has not led to the economic transformation needed to overcome poverty” (Bekele Sehen & Regassa Tsegaye, 2012, p. 10).

According to Amiya Bagchi (2004), the three basic requirements for any polity to emerge as developmental state are “[i] abolition of exercise of non-market coercion by private groups, [ii] universalization of literacy and [iii] nationalism” (p. 3). The ‘abolition of exercising non-market coercion by private groups’ needs to be applied in order to discipline domestic or foreign capitalists (Bagchi, 2004, p. 3). Even though the developmental state differs in the context of different nations, Edigheji (2010, p. 5) asserts that ‘superior economic performance’ is one common characteristic of the developmental state.

One of the negative features of the developmental state has been a very poor human rights record. There is no room for opposition and it is considered intolerable, “any organization or movement which looked as if it would challenge the state and its

developmental purpose has been swiftly neutralized, penetrated, or incorporated as part of the ruling party” (Leftwich, 1996b, p. 288).

The developmental state of East Asia began a time of unprecedented economic performance during the 1970s. However, their performance in respecting human rights was poor although their potential to distribute the benefit of the rapid growth provided them with considerable legitimacy. These countries (e.g. Korea and Taiwan) performed well in their human development and social services with remarkable achievements in health, education and per capita income as compared with other non-developmental states.

### **THE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

The democratic developmental state is one of the alternative models in the wider political economies of democracy and has emerged through a process of ‘institutional accumulation’ not as a sudden political transition (White, 1998, p. 32). The theoretical base as the notion of democracy alone could not sustain democracy and development must go hand in hand and could reinforce each other. Therefore, the developmental state is an activist state in solving socio-economic problems and giving wider space to public participation through civil society. Edigheji (2010) defined the democratic developmental state as “a state that could act authoritatively, credibly, legitimately and in a binding manner to formulate and implement its policies and programs” (p. 4).

Likewise, Bagchi (2004) argues that, in a democratic developmental state, people are free to change their government through free and fair elections. Thus, what are the different features of the democratic developmental state from the non-democratic? According to an American political scientist Gordon White (1998, p. 30), the developmental state imposes autonomy by itself and the relationship with the society and other forces with which ‘embeddedness’ is set by the ruling elite. The authority of the democratic developmental state is based on principles of consent and accountability. In addition to this, Leftwich uses the examples of Botswana, Singapore and Malaysia to explain the differences. In these countries, political parties are free to organize regular and fair elections with universal suffrage (Leftwich, 1996b, p. 290). Moreover, “governments are essentially accountable to representative political institutions, the judiciary is independent and the rule of law is more honored than not”.

They also have a good record of civil and human rights compared to the other developing countries. White (1998) believes that a democratic developmental state needs to have:

[...] sufficient political authority and administration capacity to maintain public order by managing the social and political conflicts arising from the



structural division in society and form the tension inherent in a successful growth. (p. 29)

In explaining the secret behind the success of these democratic developmental states, Leftwich (1996b) states that,

[...] in all three cases [Botswana, Singapore and Malaysia] the necessary power, authority, autonomy, continuity, and political capacity which developmental states and their elite require if they are to achieve sustained and rapid economic growth have been achieved because they are all dominated-party democracy. (p. 290)

Moreover, White (1998) outlined that what makes a successful developmental state is the autonomy of state institutions and political elite which allows them to plan and execute development programs and a form of social 'embeddedness' "whereby states are part of broader alliances with key social groups which are themselves a stimulus to socio-economic change" (p. 30).

In a nutshell, the democratic developmental state differs from the developmental state in which the autonomy of the state is legitimized by democratic election, the autonomy of the democratic developmental state comes not by repressing civic society, but by consensus with civil society for one goal of economic reforms and inclusive public participation, all the while remaining insulated from the direct political pressures of interest groups. It is also built upon considerable economic development and institutional accumulation. The occurrence of fair, free and periodic elections wherein which political parties are free to organize and fully play their roles are also important features of democratic developmental states (White, 1998; Edigheji, 2005). In addition to this, the democratic developmental state has a good record of human rights and has an accountable, responsible government in place which respects rule of law and independent judiciary; all factors which make the democratic developmental state different from the non-democratic developmental state.

### **THE ETHIOPIAN 'DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTAL' STATE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

With its long history of feudalism, democratic practices in Ethiopia were limited. During the brief period in the 1950s and 1960s when other African countries were enjoying relative democratic politics and periods of independence, Ethiopia was under Haile Selassie rule of 'absolute' feudalism (Tigist Fisseha & Medhane Tadesse, 2011). The military junta (Derg) overthrew the Hailselasie regime in 1974 but the 'vicious circle of extractive institutions' continued with an absolute military dictatorship and socialist centralization (Robinson & Acemoglu, 2012).

In May 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) overthrew the Derg after 17 years of civil war and established the government that has remained in power since 1991. The EPRDF is a coalition of four political parties: Tigrian People Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement. After the declaration of the new constitution in 1995, the EPRDF government under the leadership of Meles Zenawi, restructured what was a highly centralized state into a design of ethnic federalism (Tigist Fisseha & Medhane Tadesse, 2011).

The year 1991 was a critical year for Ethiopia (when peace was consolidated and the nation sustained). It was also surrounded with unstable neighbors like Somalia. Eritrea's quest for independence from Ethiopia was also ongoing. As Bertus Praeg (2006), an American political scientist who studied the transitional government in the 1990s, outlined, this period was accompanied by "the weakening of forces opposed to the system and on the other, by legitimizing the EPRDF's mandate through election" (p. 113).

In the 17 years fighting the Derg, the EPRDF had followed the ideology of Marxism (De Waal, 2012, p. 4). Immediately after they come to power in 1991, they began to adhere much more to socialism. They came with the vague notions of 'revolutionary democracy' and semi-market policies in order to better follow the new world order (De Waal, 2012, p. 4). Alex De Waal (2012), a political scientist from the Netherlands who was following the EPRDF politics starting from the guerrilla fighting of TPLF, interviewed the late prime minister who stated that "[f]or the first ten years after we took over, we were bewildered by the changes. The New World Order was very visible and especially so in this part of the world. The prospect of an independent line appeared very bleak. So, we fought a rearguard action not to privatize too much" (p. 4).

While this nation and peace building was underway, a vague 'revolutionary democracy' war between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out in 1998 and continued until 2000. The war not only cost lives from both sides but also seriously affected the infant economies of these nations and led to continued instability in their borders. The war also brought about significant political structural changes in the ruling party after the split of TPLF leadership in 2001. This became an opportunity for Meles to consolidate his power when he solved the crisis by dismissing and arresting nearly half of the central committee of TPLF (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 79). This was a transitional period from the collective leadership of the EPRDF to an uncontested 'Big Men' rule of Meles that paved the way to implementing his 'developmental state' model (De Waal, 2012, p. 7).

Thereafter, Ethiopia under the ‘Big Men’ registered unprecedented economic growth with a double digit real GDP average growth from 2006-2014 with records of 10.58 % (World Bank, 2016). However, this economic growth was achieved at the expense of democracy, particularly after the 2005 elections –the first democratic elections to take place in Ethiopian history. The results showed that the coalition of opposition parties won 31% of the parliament seats (Aalen, 2014, p. 193). However, some of the opposition parties did not accept the results and boycotted parliament by claiming the election result was fraudulent. As a consequence, the ruling parties used harsh measures which resulted in them, once again, gaining almost complete control of the parliament (Arriola & Lyons, 2016).

### **ETHIOPIA POST-2005- ‘A DIVERGING PATH OF DEMOCRACY’**

Scholars and the public alike agree that the 2005 election is a ‘historic lost opportunity’ and that Ethiopia missed out on an opportunity to consolidate democracy. This election had short term and long term consequences. The short term was that more than 200 opposition supporters were killed by brutal security forces and nearly 30,000 were arrested, including the top opposition party leaders (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 81). Consequently, a long-term closing of the political space, increasing migration of political leaders, journalists and fractions on the ethnic groups came about (Messay Kebede, 2011). Some of the opposition politicians chose armed struggle so that they then became threats to the peace and security of the country and national survival. The vague notion of ‘democratic developmental state’ got its biggest push from the frustration of the ruling party after the 2005 election. Scholars associate it with the drive of Meles to have total autonomy and use the ‘developmental state model’ to legitimize his power by creating economic growth and disempowering his opponents (Kebede, 2011).

In addition to this, new laws were introduced to weaken internal and external pressures. These laws targeted democratic elements such as the media, civil society and opposition parties (Adem Abebe, 2012). The two most controversial laws on ‘Charities and Societies Proclamation’ and Anti-Terrorism Law were both introduced in 2009. Under the new civil society law, “[...] any Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that receives more than 10 percent of its funding from outside the country’s borders is considered ‘foreign’. Any foreign NGO is banned from engaging in work pertaining to human rights, [...] or democratic governance” (Matfess, 2015, p. 193). With the broader definition of the anti-terrorism law, a number of opposition party members and journalists were imprisoned and criticizing policies of the ruling party become a dangerous activity (Matfess, 2015; Arriola & Lyons, 2016). This is the time where a divergent path of the infant democracy started.

## **ETHIOPIA POST-MELES: THE CURRENT CHALLENGES TO THE ‘DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTAL’ STATE**

Despite the constitutional provision of ethnic based federalism of 1995 when power was divided amongst the executive, judiciary and legislature and between federal and regional governments, power became centralized to the ‘Big Men’. With this centralized power, Ethiopia under Meles’ rule, Leftwich characterized the developmental state as having features as of a determined elite with relative autonomy (De Waal, 2012, p. 8). As Arriola and Lyons (2016) stated, “Meles’s eulogies emphasized his individual brilliance and his personal role in bringing development to the modern Ethiopian state” (p. 82).

After the death of Meles, international media and opposition groups anticipated instability and some hoped for a change of regime. However, there was a peaceful transition as the Deputy Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, became Prime Minister (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 84). However, the new prime minister is facing a lack of relative autonomy as a result of high power and resource competition within the EPRDF and also due to the patronage nature of the party (Aalen, 2014). As a result of the competition on the most important position on the constituent of the EPRDF, he was forced to appoint three deputy prime ministers representing the three dominant parties of the EPRDF. However, this arrangement was short-lived as in 2017 the prime minister appointed only one deputy prime minister.

With diverging interest and ‘inter-coalition’ politics, the new prime minister’s “[...] ability to assert himself as a leader in his own right—and to form his own government—remains constrained [...]” (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 84). This could constrain the prime minister in securing and exercising the relative autonomy that the developmental state demands. These intra-party power dynamics mean that many unsolved legitimate and constitutional questions like the special interest of the state of Oromia in Addis Ababa, which the EFDRE Constitution Article 49/5 lifted to be determined by law remains unsettled. This and other issues are starting to re-emerge as contentious issues, especially with the introduction of the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan introduced by the government. From May 2014, this Plan has resulted in spontaneous unrest as it is believed that it will cause an eviction of more than two million farmers from their livelihoods with insignificant compensation being allocated (Human Rights Watch, 2015). This measure is in contradiction with the assertion of the government that the developmental state formed a coalition with the 85% of the Ethiopia rural population.

Lack of decisions on the ‘collective administration’ of Hailemariam Desalegn is evident in this crisis after which they accepted their faults and canceled the Master

Plan. This is an unprecedented move during the EPRDF regime (BBC, 2016). The Oromo protest influenced interest groups in different areas of the country and cases of increasing clashes and murders forced the government to proclaim a state of emergency. This implies that the relative autonomy of the state from the influence of interest groups (which is an important element of developmental states) is degrading.

Regardless of the unprecedented economic growth and improvements in human development, the ambitious vision of the country to create a 'democratic and a middle-income society' by 2025 (MoFED, 2010) is facing challenges. Since 2005, Ethiopia has not only missed the historic opportunity for democratization but this missed opportunity is costing the relative peace and stability in the very fragile region of East Africa. It is becoming a fragile state with more than 10 armed oppositions which have, so far, been excluded from the politics of the nation (Messay Kebede, 2011; Matfess, 2015). The internal instability is also influenced by its geopolitical position in the volatile region of East Africa, wherein which are located terrorist movements in the failed state of Somalia, the recent civil wars in South Sudan and rough relation between Eritrea and Ethiopia. All of these factors have adversely impacted upon the domestic politics of Ethiopia (Bekele Sehen & Regassa Tsegaye, 2012).

All the media, civil society and anti-terrorism laws are rationalized on the notion of national security in relation to the country's geopolitics (Adem Abebe, 2012). Thus, the developmental state lacks the inclusiveness, popular participation and the most favorable condition for such democratic developmental state as Edigheji (2005, p. 10) stated the 'insulated state' from direct political pressures of interest groups. Moreover, the Ethiopian government's efforts to secure legitimacy by economic growth at the expense of democracy could be easily reflected by Arriola and Lyons's comparison between democracy and development (see Figure 1 below). They used a political rights measure of the Freedom House (on a scale 1 to 7, with 7 being the worst) and economic growth registered from 1995 to 2015 and compared it with the average of other sub-Saharan African countries (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 80).

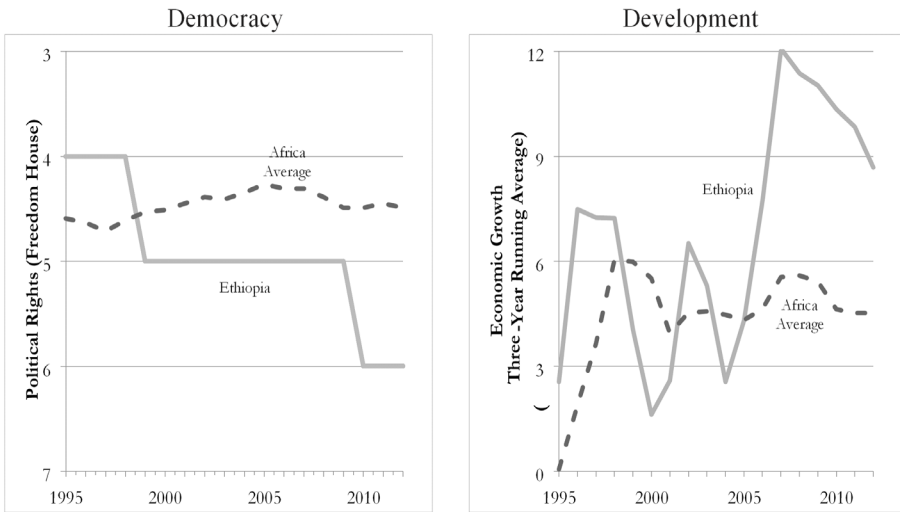


Figure 1—Ethiopia’s Receding Democracy and Rising Development, 1995–2012

Source: Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 80

Thus, as Hilary Matfess (2015, p. 182) states in her case study of Ethiopian and Rwandan governances’ ‘confusing governance character’ that they are characterized by; high growth economies (which can be seen in the above Figure 1), free-market ideologies with high state intervention, weak civil society with formal institutions of democracy, poor records of human rights but high foreign investment and military partnership with international community. This is how the external legitimacy of Ethiopia, particularly because of the geopolitical position and proximity of Ethiopia to the fragile region of East Africa, helps to allay strong international powers like the United State, Britain and the European Union in fighting terrorism (Matfess, 2015, p. 199). Ethiopia is one of the highest aid receipts in return for its role in the regional security; nearly one-third of the nation’s budget comes from donors (Matfess, 2015, p. 199). These funds allowed the authoritarian government to sustain its tyrannical nature. This is the reason Hilary Matfess (2015, p. 182) calls Ethiopia a state of ‘developmental authoritarianism’. However, this internal legitimacy based on economic growth is facing challenges. Today, people in Ethiopia are raising grievances following 25 years of authoritarian rule. The opposition and public unrest are as a consequence of the 100% election results won by the ruling party in May 2015, an increase from the 99.96% 2010 election results (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 84).

In comparison, the success of the East Asian countries with one dominant party system was due to their relatively homogenous society and relatively fairly distribution of the economic growth (Edigheji, 2005). But, the sustainability of one dominant party system is unlikely in Ethiopia with its multicultural society and historical 'path dependency' (Messay Kebede, 2011; Matfess, 2015). Due to the fact that "religious and communal differences are, of course, vulnerable to exploitation by sectarian politicians" (Sen, 2000, p. 157). However, Ethiopian experts from UNDP are optimistic that a developmental state in Ethiopia could be a model developmental state for African countries (Bekele Sehen & Regassa Tsegaye, 2012).

Predominantly foreigners but also some Ethiopian scholars based in the West see Ethiopia's capacity in building meritocratic bureaucracy, the effectiveness and success of developmental state have all not yet been fulfilled. The medium and lower civil servants lack capacity and are inefficient and corrupt (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 79). Positions are given based on loyalty to the party (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, p. 79). This has been seen in the recent campaign of 'good governance' when in response to the current public grievances, many cadres and civil servants have been let go from their positions from different regions Ethiopia. In addition, repression to opposition party followers and favoritism to political loyalists in the civil service, including higher education, is increasing and high turnover and brain drain is growing (Bekele Sehen & Regassa Tsegaye, 2012, p. 16). These rent-seeking behaviors were used by the late Prime Minister Meles in his justification on the importance of the democratic developmental state to stamp out the rent-seeking practices and develop social capital (Alazar Kebede, 2012). Today, democratic development is deteriorating. Meles himself, during an interview with Alex De Waal (2012, p. 8), expressed his fear that the developmental state would decay before becoming hegemonic throughout Ethiopia.

Thus, is the 'democratic developmental state' in Ethiopia on a democratic track? This could be measured in status of the country's political rights which is the worst 7 point (1= best and 7= worst) (Freedom House, 2016, p. 21) and "freedom of the press in Ethiopia, as measured by Freedom declined dramatically; an astounding twenty points on a scale of one hundred since 2002" (Matfess, 2015, p. 193). The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index of 2016 ranked Ethiopia 108 out of 176 countries (Transparency International, 2017).

Moreover, Ethiopia became 'not free' in the Freedom House measures for the first time in 2011 Freedom Index (Adem Abebe, 2012, p. 3). Likewise, in sub-Saharan African standard in the 2015 Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Ethiopia ranked 31 (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2015). The Economist Intelligence Unit classified Ethiopia as an "authoritarian" regime in its 2015 Democracy Index (The Economist, 2016). Human

Rights Watch and Amnesty International are accusing the regime of making excessive use of force in halting peaceful demonstrations and oppositions. The laws introduced since 2005 are repressive; control of the mass media and movement of the political oppositions are unlikely to support Ethiopia in becoming more democratic, rather the infant democracy is following a diverging path which makes the future highly uncertain.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the last decade, Ethiopia has achieved unprecedented economic growth. However, the findings suggest that Ethiopia implemented the developmental state model by closing the political space and repressing civil society, political parties and media in the name of nation building and security. Thus, these factors could not make Ethiopia a level player on the democratic developmental state playing field, rather I agree with the characterization of Hilary Matfess (2015) that the current government in Ethiopia is an “authoritarian developmental state” (p. 182).

The above reviewed literature indicates that Ethiopia’s active role in counterterrorism and the established nominal democracy gives impunity for their repressive measures, resulting in a strong partnership with the West; meaning more aid and investment. This helped Ethiopia in achieving unprecedented economic growth at the expense of democracy. However, I argue that this economic growth cannot be sustained without democratic practices. This is currently becoming evident as the ‘authoritarian developmental state’ is facing anticipated challenges including the incompetence in leadership.

In addition to this, the multicultural nature of Ethiopian society with its multiple ethnicities and religion is posing a challenge to implementing the developmental state model. The repressive nature of the government could not legitimize its power by economic development. But, today after the 100% election win by the ruling party in May 2015, public unrest has led to an unprecedented cancellation of grand national projects. At the time of writing this paper, in the first half of 2017, Ethiopia is in a state of emergency. Every day the situation is worsening due to the following issues: leadership incompetence, inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy, emphasis on skewed economic growth rather than development and poor human rights records.

From these findings, the government of Ethiopia should take lessons and revise its ‘authoritarian developmental state’ to make it more democratic, inclusive and participatory. The subsequent opening of the political space through national dialogue should be done to assure legitimate power which is a key factor for any successful democratic developmental state.



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## **(Re) Assessing the Questions of Nationalities in Ethiopia: Focusing on Secessionist Politics**

*Wuhibegezer Ferede<sup>1</sup>*

### **Abstract**

*The world has witnessed the twin processes of globalization and localization through fragmentation. These integrative and disintegrative impulses primarily challenged the legitimacy of the modern state as the internal centrifugal forces opt for dissociation within the penetrating transnational forms of association. These twin processes are evident in the Horn of Africa. In this region, there is a move towards greater supranational integration under the auspice of African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other trans-national political and economic actors amidst a series of complex secessionist movements. Due to the complexity of addressing the genesis, aspiration and accompanying difficulty of managing diverse data set, the spatial focus of this study was confined to Ethiopia. Thus, this study analyzed the historical, political, legal, economic, social, ethnic and cultural factors which are relevant to explaining the intensification of secessionist impulses in Ethiopia in spite of the adoption of ethnic federalism and the secessionist constitution (article 39) to contain such political forces using meta data and discourses collected from social media, interviews and public discourses such as written texts, oral texts (speech) and mixed texts (internet chat) available in the public space. The findings indicate that the interplay of the legacy of colonialism, adoption of anti-state Marxist principles, elitism, ethnicization of politics, domino effect of successfully seceded states and the global developments in communication and military technology as the main factors for the intensification of secessionist and liberationist politics in Ethiopia.*

**Keywords:** Ethiopia, nationality, liberation, secession, politics, Walelgne Mekonnen

The world is witnessing the twin processes of universalization and localization which ultimately leads to fragmentation as well as tendencies of integration and at the same time of separation, isolation and autarchy. These integrative and disintegrative

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impulses primarily challenged the legitimacy and perseverance of the modern state which had been the most sacred human institution. As a result, the state system has faced challenges both from internal centrifugal forces demanding for dissociation as it is witnessed in Ethiopia, Egypt, Southern Yemen, Scotland and Eastern Ukraine and the need for transnational forms of association (European Union and African Union). The former usually manifested in what is called 'nationality question' seeking for autonomy or outright secession. The second challenge is linked to globalization and has posed considerable challenges to the traditional role of the state.

These twin processes are evident in the Horn of Africa. Thus, we witness both trends which call for integration under the auspice of the African Union and Inter Governmental Authority for Disaster and Drought and as a series of active and complex secessionist and liberationist movements. With the intent of fulfilling the dream of the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism and for harnessing the advantages of regional integration, both the African Union and Inter Governmental Authority for Development are working to ensure integration. However, the region witnessed the birth of new secessionist states and it is vulnerable to further disintegration. What's unfolding in the region was/is also pervasive in Ethiopia. After the 1960s, the legitimacy of the ancient polity was seriously challenged by ethno-nationalist forces. Walelign's thesis (1969) became a manifesto of those ethno-nationalist forces that saw Ethiopia as a symbol of oppression. However, the country was a unitary state until the coming to power of the present regime.

There are two compelling perspectives pertaining to the establishment of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. State nationalists argue that it risks state disintegration. The secessionist clause in the constitution and the adoption of federation itself has the impact of secessionist acts by allowing a risk of regions to become independent. The contenders of this line also argue that there is considerable tension or incompatibility between secessionist right and federalism (Erk & Anderson, 2009). On the other hand, the liberation front ideologue holds that federalism and the rights of nations to self-determination, including and up to secession, is the lasting solution (panacea) to the nationality question in Ethiopia (FDRE, 1994; Alemu, 2005).

Besides the differing opinions of the two philosophies of what one sees on the ground is the increasing risk of disgruntled political forces such as Ogaden National Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Amhara Democratic Movement and Tigrian People's Democratic Movement which have all established military fronts to challenge the existing political arrangement. Furthermore, localized conflicts have mushroomed. This signals that the nationality question is still a living issue that needs scholarly attention.

In addition, whether the roots and the motives of these movements are simple extensions of the nationality question of the past or signify new demands has not yet been ascertained though few studies attribute the root of these problems from an internal point of view as simple extensions of the nationality questions of the past. Furthermore, most of the studies hitherto have scarcely examined the *domino effect* of successful secessionist movements in the region though many African statesmen indicated that the secession of Eritrea will stimulate secessionist movements from Cairo to Cape Town. Again, when the region experienced the birth of South Sudan, African leaders expressed their concerns that the division of Sudan would lead to a *domino effect*. Their fear wrestles on the ground that internationally sanctioned secession and creation of a new state would be contagious and thereby encourage other secession movements throughout the continent. Therefore, the fundamental intention of this paper is to analyze the chemistry/synergy of the exogenous and endogenous factors in shaping the birth and escalation of the secessionist and liberationist forces in Ethiopia. Specifically, it seeks to examine these movements by mapping historical, political, legal, economic, social, cultural and, ethnic factors. An investigation of the roots, aspirations and the complex impacts of these political forces and movements deserves comprehensive scholarly research so that the identification of historic drives and principles that govern the process could be made apparent. Within these parameters, the paper addresses the following questions: why are there secessionist movements and liberationist fronts in Ethiopia today? Or what historical, political, legal, economic, social, ethnic and cultural factors are relevant to explain the intensification of secessionist and liberationist impulses in Ethiopia?

### SECESSIONISM IN AFRICA

Notwithstanding the prophecies of some eminent scholars such as Fukuyama (1992) who had declared that the end of the Cold War would usher in the 'end of history' that might bring peaceful, stable and cooperative world order, in actual fact, the predictions of the realists of returning towards Hobbesian world where the fragmentation of international order and the emergence of rivalry among atomistic national units became evident. Thus, international politics have been dominated by inter and intrastate conflicts that have led to the collapse of states and the rise of ethno-nationalism. Therefore, at the global level, the end of the Cold War was accompanied by an increase in the number of secessionist movements which sought to establish their own political entities. The following cases are ample examples of disintegration and centrifugal forces. The separation of Pakistan from India, later Bangladesh from Pakistan and; the disintegration of Yugoslavia along ethno-religious lines; the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two republics; birth of East Timor; the disintegration of Somalia; the birth of Eritrea and Southern Sudan are important

examples which show us the potent nature of secessionist movements. We could also include the claims in Egypt at the Sinai desert, Southern Yemen, Scotland and Eastern Ukraine as contemporary examples of secessionist impulses.

In Africa, the right to exit was established in the 1960s as a decolonization instrument. At the onset, it was enforceable only for restoring justice to nations that continued under colonial rule in the post-independence period. In line with this prerogative, the UN general assembly has prohibited the recognition of dismemberment and fragmentation of states in its declaration of the Principles of International Law (UN Resolution 1514-XV, 1960). Accordingly, it allowed ethnic, religious and sub national cultural entities and groups to claim autonomy only within a state boundary. However, in practice the Organization of African Unity was vacillating between these competing rights (Hussein, 2008, p. 184). Therefore, Africa secessionist movements, which were presented to the global public as analogues to colonial liberation movements, eventually assumed the right to exit through the atomization of the mother state.

According to Bamfo (2012, p. 2) secession has become an imminent threat to the integrity of African states, but only a few African governments give recognition to it. Thus, native African governments from the colonial to post-independence period have confronted secessionism to deter the atomization of states. Nevertheless, after the 1990s numerous multinational states disintegrated and became hotbeds of separatist impulses and, thus, many aspirants of outright secession came to the forefront. The cases can be attested by analyzing the experiences in the Horn of Africa which has hosted several secessionist movements and where active claims are ongoing.

### SECESSIONISM IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The secession of Eritrea and birth of Southern Sudan are both worthy of mentioning. Eritreans relentlessly worked to secure their secessionist right by fighting for about thirty years (Wuhibegezer & Emmanuel, 2014). They attained prominence during the 1974 popular revolution and consummated it during the Post Derg Period (Bahru, 2008, p. 7).

After secession, Eritrea has also faced a secessionist movement of the Red Sea Afars who aspire to establish the *Islamic Republic of Afaria* by uniting the Afars in Ethiopia and Djibouti. The secession of Somaliland and the eventual disintegration of the whole of Somalia is another significant landmark worth mentioning. Again, the Rahanweyn Resistance Army is fighting for an independent state of South Western Somalia. Somaliland has its own secessionist movement called Awdal land in the Western part of the country. Further fracturing continues in the secessionist claim of Azania, part of Juba land. Hence, the collapse of Somalia as a nation-state with a de facto

independence of Northern Somaliland and Puntland shows a reversal towards the Pre-colonial pattern of clan autonomy and calls for a revisiting of the works of ethno-politicians and theorists of nationalism. The splitting of Sudan into an Arab-Muslim North and Black-Christian and Animist South is accompanied by breakaway movements in Beja, Darfur, Kordofan, Eastern Sudan Nubian and South Sudan.

In Ethiopia, the right of secession has appeared in the academic debate as part of the student movement politics of the 1960s (Bahru, 2014). Thus, the issue was publicized following the release of Walelign's article which argued about the existence of many nations subsumed within Ethiopian state nationalism. Due to this fact, he is adored by some as the Lenin of Ethiopia. His thesis received momentum in the post-revolutionary period and became something of an academic playground for legitimizing the secession of Eritrea (Bahru, 2008, p. 7), as well as for secession claims from Ogaden (Samatar, 1994, p. 1), Tigray (Alemu, 2005) and Oromo (Asafa, 1998).

### CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Paul and Anke (2002), the word secession means 'self-cession' implying a decision by a community to break away from a parent state. According to this definition, secession is a unilateral interruption of bonds and withdrawal from the association, usually the state and repudiation of the obligations to obey the state's laws by a group of persons due to certain injustices. Libertarian scholars referred to secession as an act of individual liberation from the hegemonic bonds or compulsory ties of the state (Kreptul, 2003).

There are two theoretical foundations that try to justify and promote secessionism. The first is called "Remedial Right Only" and the other is grouped as "Primary Right/Choice Theories". According to the advocates of a 'remedial right only', groups who believe that their rights are grossly violated have the right to break away from the union that they belong to. Therefore, secession can be justified only as a remedy of a last resort for persistent and serious injustice (Buchanan, 1997, p. 34). Some versions of this strand argue that there can be a special right to secede if the state grants the right implicitly or explicitly in the constitution or if there was an agreement/covenant in place during the establishment of the association that guarantees secession at a later period of time. However, these theories place significant constraint on the right to secede by making it conditional on the occurrences of serious injustice. The second strand belongs to thinkers who do not put any conditionality in place for the practice of secession. They argue that a group should have unconditional rights to secede without facing any injustice. Secession is not an instrument on a remedial act to mend past grievances.



## **HISTORICAL CAUSES: LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM ON STATE BUILDING**

This paper analyzes how the interaction/synergy of the exogenous forces shaped by dualistic roles of globalization and the domino effect of successful secessionism and the internal historical, political, legal, economic, social, ethnic and cultural factors are relevant in explaining the intensification of secessionist impulses in Ethiopia.

The colonial arbitrary dismemberment, without any regard for the pre-existing cultural, linguistic and ethnic lines, has promoted secessionism (Ottaway, 1982, p. 20). European colonialists ignored basic guidelines for partitioning, took decisions on scanty information about Africa's geography and divided territories without taking time to consider demographic, ethnographic and topographic imperatives. They simply broke up or clustered people, languages, customs and alliances with little rational guidance from history, tradition and logic. Hence, we find an ethnic group divided by imaginary lines between two or more countries (Ottaway, 1982, p. 20). Contrary to this development, nation states were prescribed to the peoples of the Horn as a manifestation of modernity by their colonizing masters. Thus, rigid territory centric institutions were transplanted (Ottaway, 1982, p. 15). Ottaway (1982) states that the current political tensions and territorial fragmentation crisis facing the sub region trace their origin from the institutionalization of nation state which calls for irredentism, expansionist nationalism and ethno-nationalism. Indeed, the frameworks of the institutional structure as well as the philosophical foundation of the nation states are crafted by the European colonial slaughter on the pre-colonial institutional structures of the Horn. Again, the post-colonial states in Horn of Africa have been territory centric and territories continue to serve as authentic markers of social identity. Territorial nationalism has burst out of the artificially installed state identity to play in the territorial loss-gain political game (Bahru, 2008, p. 366). This marked a great departure from the pre-colonial modes of social organizations of the African society (Ottaway, 1982, p. 20) whereby non-territorial markers of identity such as family, kinship, religion, tribe and clan ties were integral in determining identity. A clear example of such a case is a wandering tribe whose authority structure is completely disassociated from a fixed loyalty to a particular piece of land as is witnessed among wandering pastoralists. This fenced thinking, which was based on territorial nationalism, served as a hotbed for irredentism and secessionist movements following the collapse of nation states in the post-colonial period. Therefore, the post-colonial political seismic cataclysm in the Horn was decisively guided by the foundations laid down during the colonial period and further consolidated by political elites. Thus, the haphazard manner in which European powers sliced the continent into colonies makes every African country vulnerable to splitting up for a myriad of reasons (Bamfo, 2012). The haphazard manner in which nations were created has

caused irredentist movement as has been witnessed in the greater Afar, greater Eritrea/ Tigray, greater Somalia and greater Gambela movements. Thus, colonialism, instead of serving as a forerunner of globalism in the region, has ended up with counter effects, at least in producing partition and hysteria.

The modern state building processes in Ethiopia are not purely of colonial construct though not immune from the diffusion of the ideologies and the process of territorialisation. Hence, it's safe to admit that the strategy of state building in Ethiopia was ideologically colonized for it was founded on the tents of Westphalia. Similar to the rest of the region, the state-building strategy of the Solomonic monarchies in Ethiopia was highly centrist and unitary. The policy of creating a unitary state remained unfinished as autonomous ethnic and cultural units resisted the process. Thus, the multifarious groups were not moulded into a fully integrated nation state. Finally, social identities remained in a state of great ambiguity oscillating between assimilation and rejection of the mainstream culture. Thus, the imperial drive of bringing about political modernization by institutionalizing the nation state, as per the order of the day, set the question of nationalities in motion. The question was clearly expounded by the students of Haile Sellassie I University College and it has served as spirit and argument of the student politics in the Imperial protest. Following the downfall of the imperial regime, the Derg attempted to address secession impulses through the tents of socialism but the question persisted until its downfall in the 1990s.

In the Post Derg period, EPRDF made a paradigm shift in the state building strategy by instituting a decentralization approach claiming that it would end the vicious cycle of violence and danger of disintegration along with forging one political and economic community. The ruling party has applauded this as a novel change but sections of the opposition viewed it as plot for a balkanization of the centralized Ethiopian state (Alemu, 2005, p. 332). Some others also viewed it as an unfulfilled promise that served for the perpetuation of the orders of the old days (Asafa, 2001).

### **PANDORA'S BOX TRAGEDY OF COLONIAL BOUNDARIES**

The political boundaries that we exhibit merely form the map of Africa and are not the making of the people of Africa. According to Ahluwalia and Abebe (2002, p. 1), African boundaries are an artificial creation of the European colonial powers that had been imposed to imprison the people in a specific environment to be easily controlled, exploited and oppressed. Thus, the boundaries of Africa, which were designed in the European capitals in the last quarter of the 19th century, led to the partitioning of more than 200 ethnic groups throughout the continent. The leaders of the independence movement were informed to keep state borders intact and to impede states from seeking to reform or reconstruct their boundaries for doing so could result in an active

social volcano. Accordingly, as is mentioned on the charter of the OAU, the founding fathers believed that leaving colonial boundaries intact would minimize boundary conflicts in the continent.

New African governments tried to adhere closely to the boundaries they had inherited to uphold the principle of *uti possidetis*, which provides that states emerging from decolonization shall presumptively inherit the colonial administrative borders which they held at independence. That understanding has done little to dampen calls coming from some governments to clarify boundaries with their p. 38). Therefore, delegates at the first Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Addis Ababa in 1963 opted to support the inviolability of national borders as one of the organization's core principles. In 1964, the OAU formally backed this principle at the Cairo Declaration of Border Disputes among African States. The OAU was seeking to avoid opening a Pandora's Box as it discouraged groups from making irredentist claims on other groups' territories outside their common borders.

When we ask the question of why the founding fathers of the OAU feared uniting the divided people immediately after independence or why they inherited boundaries drawn by the colonial masters instead of resorting towards Indigenous institutions, the usual answer is that they did so in order to avoid catastrophic boundary conflicts. However, the conflicts that have occurred between nations are blamed on the haphazard demarcation of borders (Hughes, 2004). Examples of these types of situations are as follows; the clashes between Egypt and Libya in 1977 when Libyan forces occupied Sallum in Egypt; Egypt and Sudan had a dispute over the Hala'ib Triangle; Ethiopia and Somalia fought over Ogaden; whereas Libya and Chad fought over the Aouzou Strip; Nigeria and Cameroon had disputations over Bakassi; Ethiopia and Eritrea fought for controlling Badme and recently Abyie became a bone of contention between Juba and Khartoum.

Hence, the first generation of African leaders that worked for the decolonization of their continent failed to decolonize themselves from colonial constructs. They remained passive in uniting divided people by not unmaking what had been drawn by their colonizing masters. When they stood to establish an organization of African unity, they hoped to bring about continental unity but instead they became instruments perpetuating artificial dividing lines. The boundaries of Somaliland and Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Republic of Sudan and South Sudan are examples that show the shift of politics of boundaries of Africa contrary to inheritance. The worst impact of this process is its replication in defining intrastate territorial claims of ethnic groups. In Ethiopia, claims and counterclaims of territories on the basis of real and invented histories became the order of the day. Therefore, the high-level boundary conflicts are reproducing themselves at local levels.

## **DOMINO EFFECT OF THE SECESSION OF ERITREA AND SOUTH SUDAN**

It is very difficult to measure the level of the regional domino effect of the successful secession of Eritrea and South Sudan on the secessionist movements in Ethiopia. However, the former was very decisive in shaping the political landscape and the constitutionalization process in Ethiopia. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was in its early stage and was adopting secessionist manifesto to suit itself with regard to the Eritrean question. The Oromo Liberation Front had also followed the same road traversed by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (Alemu, 2005, p. 332) and its splinter group established its headquarters in Asmara. By the same token, the birth of the newest state of South Sudan is reactivating the Gambela question. In actual fact, the domino effect is facilitated by the CNN effect; the technology breakthrough that gave birth to various social media outlets, durable vehicles, satellite mobiles and modern guns.

## **ABUSE AND INVENTION OF HISTORY**

The manipulation and reinterpretation of history was one of the instruments of political socialization in the region. According to Guazzini (2003, pp. 2-3), the political abuse of history by elites has led to revisions and a quest for a new approach centred on cohesive trans-cultural encounters recognizing the significance of the constituents. Moreover, Crummy (2003) expounds the encounter as follows;

[...] across the Horn political elites have [...] used history for narrow ends and have compromised the conditions for scholarly study of history. The recognition of this common experience could be a starting point for a new agenda for the historians of the region, the development of historical consciousness that is broader than [...] earlier forms. This would start with re-examination of assumptions and a commitment to dialogue. It ought to also include a critical examination of the burden of the modern state and its absolutist claim, not least to territoriality and absolute borders. (pp. 129-130)

Thus, he called for a new evaluation that re-envisioned the hitherto sacrosanct historical assumptions and actors along with the conception of modern state. Therefore, a deeper scrutiny of the recent secessionist movement in the region depicts how historical identities remained powerful tools in organizing and mobilizing peoples against states burdened with the historical load burdened upon them by colonial powers. It was the abuse of history that served to explain the colonization of Eritrea by Ethiopia and the formulation of the black colonization thesis amongst Oromo elites. Due to the ongoing intellectual failure of turning past politics into binding history, our distant

past is a matter of political concern as is indicated in many of the public discourses. The practical steps needed for the purification of history from ab/uses is smartly articulated by Guazzini (2003, p. 11). This exposition prescribes the production, reproduction and dissemination of a truly free, ethical and socially worthy historical knowledge capable of educating the new generation about the culture of inclusion and appreciation of difference (Guazzini, 2003, p. 11).

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL JUSTIFICATIONS: ELITISM**

The legacies of colonialism were not the only reasons which are factored in triggering the secessionist movements of the region. Elites had been entrusted with the task of envisioning an imaginary community modelled after the nation states of Europe. This has ignited elusive passion and fervour of separatism and ultra-nationalism under the banner of a 'mythical nation'. The elitist political entrepreneurs of the region have been manipulating identities produced by their own craftsmanship of primordialization (Tronvoll, 2003, p. 51; Sisay 2009, p. 121) as a political strategy for securing political legitimacy (Guazzini, 2003, p. 4).

For this end, they select or forge identities that suit them in defining their interests disguised as the group's interest. In the process, they affect the self-definition of the group, its boundaries and social formation to the extent that its nationality would be completely different from its precursor or progenitor. "I am Oromo, Tigray or Amhara" as a first discourse which has widely diffused into the self-identification discourse in Ethiopia is a case in point. The preoccupation of the populace on divisive and politicized identities confers the chance of ideological legitimacy for political elites (Guazzini, 2003, p. 3). However, some sections of the society remain sandwiched and highly perplexed with the conflicting of values between their traditions and the notions of the political elites (Crummey, 2003, p. 117).

This phenomenon has complicated the regional globalization process and promotes separatist tendencies. Again, the contingency of forming preference in a community moves parallel to the knowledge production and dissemination usually spearheaded by elites but yet most of them convey aspects of embedded political interest. This shows the systematic distortion of facts; information and production of wronged alternatives either by politicizing or de-politicizing history and human identity. Thus, elite driven politicization of history and human identity continue to play their roles and the way out remains intact awaiting determined heralds ready to establish the organic past.

### **INVENTION OF IDENTITIES**

In spite of the existence of political entities resting on a common and exclusive identity, in most cases secessionist or/and irredentist aspirations in the Horn were rooted upon the invention of an imagined homogenous political community that rested on critical natural resources instrumental for transforming inventions into a reality by way of producing a large political community. This disillusioned process is short sighted and mostly fails to stretch its roots as far back as the pre-colonial connections; meaning that the histories of the communities will be traced from a sagacious and foggy shared origin.

This shows the irony of the project because while Europe, the birthplace of nation state, went far along the trans-nationality path, the Horn as a whole is struggling to achieve nationality (Crummey, 2003, p. 117). For in realizing the instrumentalist dream, political elites, instead of examining the processes that brought about the post-colonial realities, were preoccupied in constructing divisive walls centred on animosity neglecting pacific interactions.

However, recently there are very few regionalist heads aspiring for the rectification of the neglected portion of the Horn's veritable and rich past. Crummey articulated the regionalist vision and aspirations for creating a shared past and common destiny amongst the peoples of the Horn by moulding associations of sovereignties. In describing the causes that infuse barricades of interstate interconnections, he criticizes the betrayal of the intelligentsia against their own society in the production of knowledge on the history, culture and politics with a general tone of regret and exigency. Crummey (2003, pp. 118-129) curses the political elites for the dysfunctional states in the Horn. This shows the systematic distortion of facts; information and production of wronged alternatives that have been manufactured either by politicizing or de-politicizing history and human identity.

This following subtopic tries to address some of the basic political features and processes that have fundamentally impacted the genesis and growth of secessionist forces in Ethiopia.

### **ETHNICIZATION OF POLITICS**

Ethnicity is an elusive and fluid concept which has both subjective and objective components. Thinkers in the earlier period of the nineteenth century dismissed ethnicity as a form of irrational and false consciousness. Accordingly, Marx and Engel forecast the disappearance of ethnicity with the emergency of the industrial proletariat, but, contrary to their view, multi ethnic states fractured during the post-cold war period and aggravated the intra state conflict (Denis, 2002, p. 459). The

view that ethnicity is a transit phenomenon in the process of the formation of modern nations went through radical revision. There are two perspectives in the understanding of ethnicity. The first is the instrumentalist perspective which conceives ethnicity in a situational, contextual and subjective sense and the second is that the essentialist/primordial view is typified by a tendency to conceptualize identity in static terms. In fact, ethnic identity is not static but it bears roots in a historically relevant culture. Thus, ethnicity deserves to be treated as a phenomenon more complex than either primordial identity or the flamboyant garb of self-interest (Fardon, 1994, p. 355). In addition, ethnic identity is something that is fluid rather than static, an issue which is sometimes used as a justification for negating its authenticity. The most likely approach in dealing with it is to mingle both perspectives under a creative synthesis. The histories of various ethnic groups within the Horn need to be validated as to whether they are accurate or mythical.

Again, the liberal blueprint of nation-building was instrumented through ethnic homogenization and forceful assimilation. This has caused a rise of ethno-nationalist movements as they endeavour not to give up their identity (Salih & Markakis, 1998, p. 7). Thus, the practice of cultural democracy through a multi-national decentralized arrangement has gained momentum in multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies throughout the Horn because of the disastrous destruction of the nation states (Crummey, 2003, p. 123). Thus, state-driven national unification and the era of centralization have come to an end. The dysfunctions can be inferred from the irony when the architectures of the notion went far into regional union yet the Horn is still exercising the project of state building by making new walls out of the old breaks (Crummey, 2003, p. 118).

The abovementioned explanations trace the roots of the ethno-nationalist movement for secession from the problem of the state in legitimizing itself while it went to the process of nation building. The nation building, as is indicated, in the liberal blueprint and the way in which ethnicity was addressed in the process, is argued to be the drive and the embedded cause for the rise of secessionist politics in Ethiopia. On the other hand, Rok (2002) argued that ethnicity has much to do with competitive politics caused by environmental scarcity. It is used by the powerful and/or powerless groups to control the state apparatus and its resources. The later explanation emphasizes the different impacts in resource allocation and state interference as the main cause for ethnic based competitive politics; something which usually manifests as outright claims for secession after weighting the power balance of contenders.



## **THE POLITICS OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AND POST-1991 DEVELOPMENTS**

In Ethiopia, the question of nationalities and the right of secession appeared in the academic debate as part of the student movement politics of the 1960s (Bahru, 2014). Thus, the issue was publicized following the release of Walelign's article which argued about the existence of many nations masked in Ethiopian state nationalism. This article was however challenged by many state nationalists in the movement (Ayalewu, 2013).

Due to this fact, he is adored by some as the Lenin of Ethiopia. His thesis serves as a basis for legitimizing the secession of Eritrea; a claim from ONLF, OLF and TPLF in defiance of state nationalists' tent of maintaining de-ethnicized unitary state. The question caused a state legitimating crisis and a rise of ethno-nationalism which saw Ethiopian nationalism as a symbol of oppression, black colonialism and cultural suicide. It has also created an impasse between Pan-Ethiopian state nationalists and ethno-nationalists. However, Walelign and his colleagues understood the state and its ideology in light of Marxism as an institution of oppression which deserves dismantling for ensuring proletariat internationalism. I regard this as tantamount to ideological national treason and self-denial.

After the downfall of the Derg, brought about through a coalition of ethno-nationalist insurgent groups, there was an attempt of instituting a transitional charter which called for redefining the Ethiopian state whereby equal rights and self-determination of all the peoples to be the governing principles of political, economic and social life of the peoples of Ethiopia would be granted. What had been chartered out in this transitional charter was later on confirmed in the establishment of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the secessionist constitution. Thus, EPRDF made a paradigm shift in the state building strategy by instituting a decentralization approach (Eshete, 2013) claiming that it would end the vicious cycle of violence and danger of disintegration along with forging one political and economic community. It has applauded it as a novel change that has transformed Ethiopia's political landscape. However, both the federal arrangement and the secessionist constitution are intellectual and bring with them practical challenges. Scholars and some opposition parties criticized the federal arrangement as primordial tribalism that will provoke ethnic animosity/violence (Alemu, 2005, p. 332); and as the continuation of Abyssinian divide-and-rule by a minority group domination in a new fashion (Vaughan, 2003). Recently, we have also witnessed localized identity questions. Still, EPRDF insisted that it had instituted political modernization that would ensure Ethiopian renaissance by transcending the odds of disintegration. However, if we ask the question of why the adoption of ethnic federalism and the secessionist constitution (article 39) failed



to contain such political forces, the answer remains implausible.

## CONCLUSION

The study was focused on historical watersheds without dismissing the hitherto mentioned factors that serve as roots for the rise and development of secessionism in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the making and interruption of nation state building has caused intensification of secessionist, liberationist and irredentist ethno-nationalist forces in Ethiopia. A common way to express the later was by using the epithet greater. This political cataclysm was further aggravated by the (ab)use of history and instrumentalization of social identities. The crux of the matter centred on the binary political impasse between ethno-nationalism and state nationalism due to a lack of state legitimacy.

Hence, there is a need for political modernity that liberates the mind tricked by the imprints of colonialism diffused through modern education and hastens the moves towards creating state legitimacy. As indicated in the discussion above, the politics of the past serve to legitimize political claims. Thus, the purification of history from (ab)uses through the production and dissemination of professional knowledge is a demanding task that awaits experts in the area in lieu of leaving it aside for mis-educated squabbling elites. The other prominent curse is the competitive ethnicization of politics that diffuses into every village and town in Ethiopia and legitimizes real or invented injustices of the past and serves for promoting separatism.

In addition to the internal developments, secessionism in Ethiopia is also fostered by the domino effect of the birth of secessionist states in the region and by the new technological breakthroughs including social media and warfare technologies.

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## The Practice of Civic Ethical Education and its Implications for the Development of a Democratic Political Culture

Yilkal Ayalew<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The major goal of civic and ethical education is to create a sense of interdependence and recognition of political and moral responsibility amongst citizens. This paper deals with the implementation of Civic and Ethical Education (CEE) and its role in enhancing the political culture. Political culture is highly associated with and manifested through the skill and attitudes of citizens. The study was conducted based on a qualitative approach. Data were collected from students, teachers, school archives, parents, concerned officials and studies conducted on related issues. It has been revealed that the practice of CEE has been beset by many problems such as weak methodological and assessment techniques, attitudinal problems and the presence of a gap between the existing reality out of the school and the theoretical democratic values embedded within the subject matter. This reality indicates that the opportunity to develop a democratic political culture of youths through teaching civic and ethical education remains questionable. It is recommended that the government need to urgently rectify the problem both at national and regional state levels.*

**Keywords:** Civic and ethical education, democratic political culture, civic knowledge, civic skills

It is almost impossible for any one person to define the meaning of ‘political culture’ in a way that everybody could agree on. Several definitions and explanations had been suggested and none of them received unanimous acceptance. One of the points of divergence is as to whether or not culture is the cause of institutional structures (Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky, 2002, p. 508). This paper is not intended to present a convincing assertion on the two sides; rather it is to show the unresolved disagreement over the meaning and concept of political culture.

The fact is that culture is malleable so that it shapes itself according to the existing realities. It is transmitted neither unchanged nor without question from generation to

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generation. By taking the view that culture is not the cause of institutional structures, Barry (1970) argues that “a democratic political culture is a learned response to live under democratic institutions” rather than pre-and democratic culture and who are active participants in the political, social and economic activities of the country; citizens who acquire civic virtue and are rational commitment exerting a causal force up on those institutions (pp. 51-52). Accordingly, to strengthen a democratic system and institutions, citizens who are equipped with a culture of democracy play crucial roles. The idea of democracy in this paper means a system of government in which the supreme political authority has been vested in the hands of the people and exercised either directly by them or indirectly through their elected representatives. Accordingly, democracy embraces the principles of equality, individual freedom and opportunity to participate for the common people, as those who actually wield political power. Democracies like the USA and Western European countries invested huge capital on civic education to produce active and informed citizens (Finkel, 2002, p. 994). This shows that active and informed citizenry can be cultivated through education; democratic values and principles are not inherently attributed to humans rather they are acquired through formal or non-formal education (MoE, 2007, p. 7).

In formal education, civic education has an irreplaceable role in equipping all, especially young citizens, with civic knowledge, attitudes and skills. Acquiring civic knowledge, skill and attitudes is necessary for citizens to become active in the democratic processes (Galston, 2004, p. 263). The first dimension, *knowledge*, comprises the facts and ideas of democracy, citizenship, the Ethiopian government system and global concerns that students need to know about in order to become informed participants in civic life. The second dimension, *attitudes*, includes the democratic ideals and devotion to those ideals that motivate civic commitment. The third dimension, *skills*, includes the ability to navigate the rules and processes of citizenship and governance in the society. From 1990 onwards, states had begun to pay attention to civic education and now enjoy popularity and acceptance as an additional instrument for promoting democracy (Finkel & Smith, 2011, p. 419).

In 1991, the Derg military regime was replaced by the transitional government in Ethiopia. In 1993, following the political transformation, a new curriculum on civic education was disseminated along with a New Education and Training Policy. Initially, the subject was known as Civic Education. Later on, in 2000, it was renamed as Civic and Ethical Education (CEE) after a curricular reform took place (Yamada, 2011, p. 98). The very rationale of the new curriculum was to support and entrench the newly established democratic system (MoE, 2007, p. 8). It is argued that a democratic system behaviors which gives life to them. The contested nature of the concept and meaning meant that the concept of political culture was pushed away by academics. However, has been effectively built when there is active, informed citizens’ participation.

Accordingly, CEE grew to have an irreplaceable role in producing citizens equipped with values of good governance capable of discharging responsibilities (MoE, 2007, pp. 6-7).

The above traits, knowledge, attitudes and skills, which are supposed to be acquired by students, are important in democratic systems. To pursue democratic political cultures, the government of Ethiopia had made various reforms at different times on the subject matter. Amongst other reforms, in 2007, a blueprint was prepared for the subject to set national standards in each grade level. This is to ensure nationwide uniformity in the delivery of instruction and students performance. The content of the blueprint has mainly focused on three issues. The first is the provision of students' profile after completing each phase of schooling starting from preschool to preparatory. The second issue is about what teaching methodologies and assessment techniques should be employed in delivering the subject matter. The third issue deals mainly with the organizational structures established from regional state to school level. Provisions pertaining to methodology and assessment techniques are also not free from limitations since there is no implementation strategy.

There are some studies conducted about the role of CEE in changing students' behavior (Meron, 2006; Dawit, 2006; Birhanu, 2012; Daniel, 2009; Yamada, 2011). Their focus was CEE and students' behavior through qualitative approach followed by case study strategy. Yamada undertook a discourse analysis of the curriculum and CEE text books in relation to the issues of diversity and fragility. Dawit studied the perception of teachers and students towards CEE and its practice in four high schools by means of a descriptive survey method. These studies are crucial in filling the gap of research pertaining to the practices of CEE. However, there is no comprehensive study which examines the challenges thwarting the effective implementation of CEE and its role in the development of democratic political culture of students.

The above-mentioned studies and others, including the Ministry of Education (MoE), came up with the findings that the subject matter is not in a position to achieve the intended objectives, though there are some significant changes in the awareness of students towards their rights. The main purpose of this study is to assess the role of CEE in enhancing the democratic culture of students. Active, informed and competent personalities are highly associated with the skills and attitudes of students (Finkel, 2002, p. 1015). Hence, to understand the role of CEE for the development of a student democratic political culture, no better way is available except assessing the challenges that the subject matter has been faced with up to now. Thus, the study intends to answer the following two research questions: (1) what existing problems prevailed in the execution of CEE? (2) What implication has arisen from the role of CEE in building a democratic culture of students?

Accordingly, the paper is organized in the following manner; exclusive of this part, the paper is made up of four other parts. The section that presents theoretical framework shows the relationship between education and democratic political culture. More specifically, an attempt is made to explain the role of CEE in enhancing a democratic political culture as well as the interdependence nature of civic knowledge, attitudes and skills with that of a democratic political culture. The way in which the research attempts to solve the problem is included within the methodology section. What the study has revealed is narrated in the section of discussion of results. In this section, the challenges, which have prevailed over the lifespan of CEE are discussed. Moreover, the implications of the results with regard to the development of a student political culture are explained.

### **POLITICAL CULTURE AND EDUCATION**

Political culture has existed as long as people have recounted observable differences among countries or groups. As noted above in the introduction part, the meaning and concept of political culture is subject to disagreement amongst scholars of the field (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky, 2002, p. 508). The divergence is whether “political culture shapes institutional structure or political culture is shaped by institutional structure”. The proponents of the first notion perceive culture as a pre-rational commitment exerting a causal force upon those institutions (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 11). Critical of Almond and Verbas’ position Barry (1970, pp. 51-52) argues that a democratic political culture is a learned response to living under democratic institutions. The idea that every political system has been influenced by the existing norm, tradition and value of the society is acceptable. I argue that modern democratic ideals are first born out from enlightened Europeans and appeared as institutions by progressive intellectuals involved in politics like the American founding fathers. Hence, for the well-functioning of such democratic ideals and institutions people who are equipped with democratic outlooks are needed. Presumably the United States and many West European countries were aware that people can learn democratic values, skills and participatory orientations through civic education and thus devoted considerable resources over the past several decades to civic education as part of their larger efforts to provide democracy assistance and strengthen civil society in emerging democracies around the world (Finkel, 2002, p. 994). Many explanations and definitions have been tried culture as the “set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system” (Aronoff, 2002, p. 11640). Hence, political culture is intimately linked with the notion of ‘behavioral revolution’ which signifies a shift” from studying formal institutions to informal behaviors which gives life to them. The contested nature of the concept and meaning

meant that the concept of political culture was pushed away by academics. However, following the end of the Cold War, a greater interest has been seen among states to have in place a supportive political culture for their democratic institutions.

It is apparent that societies have always been in search of ways in which their young citizens can be prepared for citizenship and in how they can best learn to take part in societal life. After the 1990s, democracies became convinced of the importance of creating a supportive political culture for their democratic systems and institutions (van Deth, 2013, p. 9). Today, that interest might better be described as a growing concern, particularly in democratic societies. The level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the totality of citizens in a state is determined by the maintenance and improvement of constitutional democracy (Stimmann, 1998, p. 3). Such improvement of constitutional democracy flourishes again when citizens develop responsible ways of thinking, believing and acting (Boyer, 1990, p. 5). For this result, education became the best instrument to nurture citizens according to democratic political culture. Etymologically the word “education” derives from the Latin *educere*, which means to lead or draw out and from which we retain. This provides drawing out or developing the potential within a person. This could consist of the activity of drawing out a specific ability, such as the ability to perform some skill.

### **CEE AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CULTURE**

Despite education having been delivered within a formal classroom system, CEE is now gaining greater attention than ever before. The learning outcomes of the subject matter include the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by citizens to become effective and active citizens. An effective active citizen is a person who understands the obligation and undertakes the responsibility to improve community conditions, builds healthier communities and addresses social problems (MoE, 2007, p. 4). Accordingly, regardless of differences in approach and methodology, programs in an educational system should be designed in a way so as to promote common advantages and social welfare. The rationale for designing and implementing curriculum for CEE at all levels of education in Ethiopia confirms the aforementioned narrations. Accordingly, CEE has irreplaceable roles in producing citizens equipped with values of good governance and democratic thinking and who are active participants in the political, social and economic activities of the country; citizens who acquire civic virtue and are capable of discharging responsibilities, as well as citizens possessing scientific knowledge to combat backward traditions (MoE, 2007, p. 3). Though CEE is vital in equipping the aforementioned values and skills, it needs a supportive democratic culture from the government, the school and the society at large to mirror.



The need to deliver the subject is associated with the notion that democratic values and principles are inherently attributed to humans but they are acquired through formal or non-formal education. Accordingly, civic knowledge, skills and attitudes, nurtured by CEE, are the basis of such a democratic political culture (van Deth, 2013, p. 9). Recent research indicates that levels of political awareness highly affect the acceptance of democratic principles and attitudes towards specific issues, as well as adversely impacting upon political participation as a whole (Finkel, 2002, p. 994). So far, political culture is widely perceived as something composed of values, beliefs, norms and assumptions which are mostly manifested through believing and acting. Civic disposition and skills of citizens are determinant factors in the development of democratic political culture. and skills of citizens are determinant factors in the development of democratic political culture.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, a qualitative approach has been used. Qualitative data about the practice of CEE as well as the students' performance was collected through interview Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and observation. Interviews were undertaken with student representatives, CEE teachers, school principals and wereda and regional state experts. Data were also collected through FGDs with teachers from different departments and students. Non-participant observation was also conducted to see classroom instructions and students' interaction in the school environment. Document analysis was also very important in this study in reviewing students' records, research findings on CEE to strengthen findings as well as to make inferences at national level about the challenges pertaining to CEE in the promotion of a democratic political culture. Cluster random sampling was used for selecting informants in a total of five FGDs from two selected high schools: Hotie Preparatory and Secondary School and Hayik Preparatory and Secondary Schools in South Wollo Zone

According to Creswell, a qualitative data analysis is conducted concurrently with gathering data, along with data interpretation and writing the research report (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). The data gathered from the interviews and FGD were first transcribed and then thoroughly analyzed. In addition, the researcher used the following steps: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. This activity was accompanied by triangulation of a thematic analysis on data from the literature. Then, thematic categories with codes of the data were identified before the research report was written.

### **CHALLENGES THAT THWART EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF CEE**

According to a survey conducted by MoE in 2007, there was a problem with the mode

of instruction in teaching CEE; it was done through a process that made students passive and become dominated by the teacher (MoE, 2007, p. 15). The blueprint of CEE urges concerned bodies to place a high emphasis upon the process of teaching and learning especially with regard to the mode of delivery of instruction. Sadly, this is not the case today after the promulgation of the blueprint. Teachers remain disengaged from interactive teaching activities like debate, visiting public institutions and holding class group discussions that could develop civic skills (Interview and Class Observation).

Civic skill pertains to the state of exercising one's own rights and discharging responsibilities as a citizen (Stimmann, 1998, p. 8). It is the most crucial but inseparable component of CEE and encourages students to be equipped with participatory skills. Students' engagement in civic issues implies a practical implementation of what they learn in their civic class and it has an irreplaceable impact on the students' democratic political culture.

Civic attitudes are not developed by teaching young people; only the facts of CEE are conveyed. Participatory teaching approach is vital for the development of civic attitudes of students. Data gathered through FGDs and interviews revealed that almost all teachers, students as well as wereda and zonal experts and focal persons agreed that students did not develop their civic attitudes vis-a-vis their civic knowledge. This scenario is also evident in studies conducted in other regions of the country (Birhanu, 2012, p. 68; Dawit, 2006, pp. 73-74). Accordingly, students are hesitant to accept and respect the values of CEE. Hence, it requires equipping them with a civic character by encouraging active commitment about democratic values such as public spiritedness, civility, respect for the rule of law, critical mindedness and willingness to listen, negotiate and compromise (SCA, 2014, p. 17; Stimmann, 1998, p. 11).

Classroom observation revealed significant inconsistencies between the textbook approach and the teachers' delivery of instruction. The textbooks were prepared with case studies and questions for discussion for students in 2010. However, teachers referred to other sources and previous text books to prepare short notes for the students. The main reason was lack of interest from the teachers to conduct class discussions. Lack of interest in participatory learning by both teachers and students is also evident in schools found in other regions (Birhanu, 2012, p. 68; Dawit, 2006, pp. 78-79). For instance, Dawit (2006, pp. 78-79) revealed that teachers did not employ debate or dialogue activities because they fear to carry out debates on political issues since there is big gap between theoretical knowledge and the realities on the ground.

Assesment techniques have irreplaceable impacts on the effective accomplishment of civic knowledge, attitudes and skills of the students. In this regard, MoE (2007, p. 9), in its blueprint, provides some techniques (*Performance Assessment Technique and*

*Portfolio Assessment Technique*) as a benchmark to be applied by schools in general and teachers in particular. In practical scenario, the above techniques are neither implemented in teaching CEE nor institutionalized in the category of assessment techniques in schools throughout the Amhara National regional state. The case was attributed to a lack of authorized assessment techniques on civic skills and civic attitudes. The officer in the Amhara National Regional Educational Bureau says the Bureau needs only one school which is committed to being a model in this regard and then its unreserved support would be given (Interview with CEE officer at the Amhara National Regional Education Bureau). The problem has also been witnessed at national level. The questions in the national examination prepared for grade 10 and 12 fall under cognitive domains which assess the content that ought to be known by the students. This leads teachers and students to focus only on the knowledge content of the subject matter by relegating the two components of CEE skill and attitude.

### **PERCEPTIONS /MISPERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE SUBJECT MATTER ITSELF**

There is ample evidence that supports the argument that CEE is an unlucky subject in the Ethiopian academia. One of the most visible grounds is that the subject is under pressure and subjected mainly to the political interests of the incumbent political party, EPRDF, without showcasing the interests of the opposition or the public opinions at large. On the one hand, the subject has been considered as an instrument of indoctrination of the incumbent political party to elongate its rule and the teachers of CEE are perceived as cadres of such a mission. On the other hand, the political elites of the ruling party do not trust the teachers for fear that they could use the subject to promote the ideas of the opposition and negative attitudes towards ‘constitutional order’. These two perceptions or misperceptions fueled each other and pose complicated challenge to an effective implementation of the subject. One of the challenges mentioned above is that teachers are disengaged from participatory learning activities such as debate and dialogue because they do not care/dare to touch political issues either appreciating or disregarding the existing political system because of presumed consequences (Dawit, 2006, p. 78).

Another attitudinal problem comes from the students and teachers themselves. On the one hand, students who participated in the FGDs did not consider CEE as a subject with equal weight to other subjects. This attitude emanates from the assumption that the content of CEE is similar across all grade levels of general education. As a result, students assume that nothing new would be added in learning CEE. However, the students’ argument seems to overlook the importance of civic attitudes and skills that should be built up progressively throughout all age levels. Looking at the subject matter only from knowledge point of view is not only the problem of the students.

Rather, teachers and the school administration also share such perceptions. On the other hand, the absence of a sense of ownership for the subject matter is manifested in most teachers as a chronic attitudinal challenge. This emanates from two reasons. The first is the scarcity of teachers who graduated in CEE. Considering the interdisciplinary nature of the subject and the newly stipulated curriculum, it is currently being taught by teachers who graduated from other fields of study, i.e. history, political science or geography. These teachers have no sense of ownership to make them committed to the delivery of instruction or to the subject itself. Even though new graduates of CEE are recently joining schools, the gap has still not been narrowed. For instance, until the time of data collection for this study in Haik Preparatory School (Dec. 2014) there had only been one teacher of CEE who was a graduate of CEE. The Regional Educational Bureau, for its part, admits the problem; despite the number of graduates increasing each year, it is unable to narrow the gap (Interview with CEE officer at the Regional Education Bureau, Feb. 2015). The second reason is related to the aforementioned political perception and misperception towards the subject matter. Since many other teachers and the public consider the subject as an instrument of indoctrination of the incumbent political party, the teachers are not interested in demonstrating their commitment to the teaching of the subject.

### **LACK OF MOTIVATION IN THE TEACHERS THEMSELVES**

Implementing appropriate and necessary teaching methods and assessment regard, both MoE and schools today limit their efforts almost exclusively to teaching civic knowledge, especially the kinds of knowledge that can easily be measured by standardized achievement tests. Teaching approaches and assessment techniques to enhance students' performance should be conducted in the classroom during instruction. techniques are highly demanding. It poses an additional burden to the teacher; something which is not the case with most other subject teachers. "Why do I suffer if I am not motivated by some incentives" was the response of almost all informant teachers during discussions and interviews. As a result, lack of incentives for making CEE a priority for the school teachers makes them distance themselves from their once central civic mandate. This issue is critical and needs special attention by concerned authorities. To bring about promising changes from the subject, the teachers need to work more than their normal mandate. For this demanding task, they need to get incentives.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRACTICE OF CEE IN DEVELOPING A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE**

The findings of this study have revealed that CEE is not in a position to develop students' democratic political culture. This is something that needs immediate and

serious rectification. The government of Ethiopia has introduced and implemented CEE through successive reforms and revisions. According to the Ministry of Education, the objective of CEE is to support the democratic system and institutions by producing citizens who are knowledgeable about democratic political cultures. Hence, the subject has been accorded a special position at policy level to produce informed, competent citizens who can engage in civic and political matters and be responsible and ethical citizens. However, the results are far from expected. If one applies a simple inductive inference; the subject matter arguably has not been successful in producing students possessing a democratic political culture. Civic attitudes and skills are about the conformity of students with characters of good citizens and who actively participate in the socio-political systems respectively. So, it could be put like this; civic attitudes and skills are components of CEE that are determinant in the development of democratic culture. Both the two high schools studied, as well as other studies, revealed that student' performances in the two components fall below expected outcomes. As indicated above, the existing challenges impede upon an effective implementation of proper methodology and assessment techniques vital for the development of skill and attitude. Therefore, CEE is not achieving its goals in the development of a democratic political culture of students. The government needs to reflect once more upon the realities outside the school in general and on the subject of CEE in particular.

The absence of expected coordinated efforts from all levels of governments, school communities and parents that could motivate the students to develop the expected knowledge, attitude and skills led to this significant gap between knowledge on the one hand and attitude and skill on the other hand. In this regard, both MoE and schools today limit their efforts almost exclusively to teaching civic knowledge, especially the kinds of knowledge that can easily be measured by standardized achievement tests. Teaching approaches and assessment techniques to enhance students' performance should be conducted in the classroom during instruction.

Moreover, the three components of CEE cannot be grasped through formal education only. Attitude and skills are highly shaped by the values, norms and traditions entrenched within societies. Students get confused and frustrated when they observe that the reality can often be inconsistent with what they learn in the school. Eventually, they began to figure out that they need to learn only for grades and become reluctant to strictly follow the principles. One can understand this from the questions that students

pose in class such as "why does this happen if the principle says like this?". The factual materials they received in schools become incompatible with the system entrenched in their society and government offices. This implies that there is a large gap and mismatch between CEE learning and the realities of the learner outside the school (Dawit, 2006, p. 73). Such inconsistencies between CEE and reality are one of the

most serious problems that obstruct the role of the subject matter for the development of democratic political culture.

The fact remains that the task of aiming to create critical, active and competent citizens is commendable on the part of the government but frustrating for these citizens dealing with the many evident contradictions within the available course. Therefore, values of CEE need to be internalized by both the society and the government. Hence, searching for other ways to teach CEE becomes necessary in order to achieve the goals of CEE. Amongst other ways, mainstreaming CEE among concerned educational sector authorities, parents, media, parliamentary debates, seminars, workshops and discussions with the elderly could be helpful for progress.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In general, it has been revealed that in both schools and grade levels studied as part of this research, students were not good enough in either civic attitudes or skills which are the determinant factors of democratic political culture of citizens. Disengagement from methodologies such as debate, field work, presentations and assessment techniques appropriate to assess required attitudes and skills pose pressing problems in the implementation of CEE. The huge gap between the existing reality out of schools and the theoretical democratic values in the subject also makes both teachers and students hesitant to act according to the expected situations. Moreover, attitudinal problems pertaining to the subject matter and teachers greatly inhibit the effective execution of CEE in the schools. Therefore, one can certainly conclude that if civic attitudes and skills are determinant elements for the development of democratic political culture and if the performance of students is below the expected levels, CEE is not playing its role on the development of students' democratic political culture.

An immediate rectification is needed to counter the prevailing challenges on the CEE practices. To this end, the following are recommendations made in line with the above outlined conclusions:

- The federal and regional governments should take practical measures in building democracy.
- Government officials at all levels need to be adherents of democratic values and be role models for youths.
- Adult civic education needs to be provided with a view towards creating civic awareness in societies.
- The Amhara National Regional State Educational Bureau needs to prepare

specific practical guidelines for the implementation of the blueprint. Necessary feedback as well as supervision should be given.

- The Amhara National Regional State Educational Bureau, the Zonal and Wereda Educational offices should all give due attention to the
- implementation of CEE beyond sticking to the reports which are not usually acceptable.
- The Amhara National Regional State Educational Bureau should prepare an authorized assessment technique implemented by all schools to measure attitudes and skills.
- Both the federal and regional governments should prepare incentives for CEE teachers for their additional burden in enhancing attitudes and skills of students.
- Teachers should be committed in their jobs to balance students' civic skills with their civic knowledge.

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## **The Internet and Democratization in Ethiopia: Challenges and Prospects**

*Tezera Tazebew<sup>1</sup>*

### **Abstract**

*The traditional Ethiopian political system was closed, having no idea of (Rawlsian) public reason and involving little exchanges of information. The ruler and the ruled, the center and the periphery (including the frontier) had no significant communication. Exchange of information was basically one-way and vertical, i.e. from the center to the periphery, from the ruler to the ruled. Since its first entrance in Ethiopia in the early 2000s, the internet has widened the Ethiopian public sphere. Still, under a state monopoly, internet usage and internet actors in Ethiopia have seen massive increments during the last two decades. The internet is facilitating popular mobilization and strengthening civil society in Ethiopia. While at times, the Ethiopian government has been obliged to respond to public opinion expressed on the internet, the most important issue that will determine internet's role in Ethiopia's democratization is the practical application of freedom of expression. This study investigates the much-publicized democratic potential of the internet and related technologies to understand how (if at all) the medium could be (and was being) mobilized against an authoritarian regime. The challenges that the internet's capacity faced in the democratization of the Ethiopian state and society and opportunities ahead will be examined.*

**Keywords:** Internet, media, Ethiopia, democratization

The media has its own impact on politics, domestic and international. The term “CNN Effect” has been used to indicate the impact of the media on domestic political dynamics and international affairs (Robinson, 1999, p.301). One of the media infrastructures that came to the fore during the late twentieth century was the internet; an electronic network of computers that allows millions of computer users around the world to exchange information. The Internet Revolution that the whole world began to witness since the early 1990s<sup>2</sup> has arguments on the internet's impact on democratization. The third section traces already impacted -both positively and negatively -on the daily

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lives of people in terms of personal and societal wellbeing, social relations, pop culture and economics (DiMaggio, Paul, Hargittai, Neuman & Robinson, 2001; Litan& Rivlin, 2001; Kelty, 2008; Briggles, Brey & Spence, 2012).

One of the areas in which the advent and power of the internet is assumed to have its own unique implications is democratization (Weare, 2002; Kahn & Kellner, 2004). Needless to say, the scholarly debate is far from a consensus on the role of the internet on democratization. On the one hand, there are scholars who argue that the internet furthers democracy. On the other hand, there are others who argue that the internet doesn't have a role in democracy promotion, or in fact, that the internet hurts democracy (Persily, 2017).

Ethiopia entered the digital age during the early 1990s. This coincided with the transition from an authoritarian rule to what was ostensibly an "ambitious attempt at democratic transformation" (Ottaway, 1995, p. 67). Over the years, the internet has expanded in Ethiopia, with an ever-growing and visible impact, not less in the political processes. Yet, much of the debate on the impact of the internet on democratization is not supplemented by watertight empirical findings. It is thus the intention of this paper to address this lacuna by critically examining the role of the internet on the democratization of the Ethiopian state and society and its prospects. Does the internet have a role in democratization and, if yes, how? What are the opportunities that the internet creates for the democratization of Ethiopian state and society? What are the challenges faced in this endeavor? What are its prospects for genuine success in lifting Ethiopia out of the prism of authoritarianism? These are the most important questions that I want to address within this brief paper.

This study employed a qualitative research methodology. The study used secondary sources of data, which are collected from books, journal articles, periodicals and other public records, both published and unpublished. The study is underpinned by the conceptual framework of technological instrumentalism, which is grounded on the assumption that the internet's impact on political changes is affected by several factors "which include political flux, the rate of Internet penetration, and government control over the Internet" (Ko, Lee & Jang, 2009, p. 281).

To properly address the topic, this paper will be divided into five main sections. Following some brief introductory remarks, the first section provides a brief account of the politics of democratization. After indicating the global contours of democratization, the second section introduces the arguments and counterthe state of

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the origin of the internet goes back to the 1960s. It was in the early 1990s, however, that the internet was transformed from being a military communication to a commercialized network.

democratization in the post-1991 Ethiopia. In the fourth section, a brief assessment will be made of the records of the internet's role in promoting democratization in Ethiopia. Also discussed in this section are the major challenges that threaten the internet's role. In the fifth section, an analysis will be made of the prospects of the successful role of the internet for democratization in Ethiopia. Finally, the paper concludes by finding that the impact of the internet so far is minimal and how its role in the future will be determined by a combination of internal and external factors affecting its use and governance.

## **UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION**

The analytical approach of this study is grounded on a distinction between democracy and democratization. Here, democratization is seen in its broadest signification as embodying not just the political aspect of democracy (democratic government), but the becoming of democracy a way of life (Zakaria, 2003). As a way of life, democracy is a socially constructed system. Criticizing stipulative definitions, Laurence Whitehead (2002) offers an alternative definition which emphasizes the 'constructedness' of democracy. For Whitehead (2002), democracy is not "a predetermined end-state, but is a long-term and somewhat open-ended outcome, not just as a feasible equilibrium but as a socially desirable and imaginary future" (p. 3). From this, Whitehead goes onto describing democratization as

"the process of moving towards this not entirely fixed future state [i.e. democracy, which] must be analyzed as a complex dynamic and long-term affair. It will also be 'open-ended' in the sense that it always remains open to further reconsideration and revision in the light of experience".

## **DOES THE INTERNET PROMOTE DEMOCRATIZATION?**

As noted above, there is no scholarly consensus on the role and/or impact of the internet on democratization. On the one side are what might be called cyber-optimists and on the other are the cyber-pessimists. In between the two, there are cyber-skeptics, representing the amplification theory. First, for cyber-optimists, the internet and democracy have positive correlations, i.e. internet furthers democracy. The optimism is grounded mainly on earlier history and the nature of the internet itself (Best & Wade, 2009; Ko et al., 2009). The precedent of modern communications technology impacting on democratic governance was laid by developments related to the telephone, radio, television and satellites (Weare, 2002, p. 664).

To the cyber-optimists, the internet does indeed promote democracy. The democracy scholar Larry Diamond (2010) was speaking for many when he dubbed the internet

a “liberation technology”. In their study of the impact of the internet on democracy since 1992, Michael L. Best and Keegan Wade (2009), scholars at Georgia Tech, concluded that since the turn of this century, the internet has indeed become “a positive force for democratization” (p. 255). Recently, the Arab Spring became the poster child for this school of thought.

How does the internet promote democratization? There are several theories explaining this correlation. First, the internet is one media of exercising the freedom of expression that democracy entails. Second, the most prominent explanation is encapsulated in the concept of the dictator’s dilemma (Boas, 2000). Echoing the concepts of prisoners’ dilemma and the security dilemma, the *dictator’s dilemma* describes a condition in which globalization has the effect of opening up the communication borders of sovereign states, thereby enabling a free flow of information, unconstrained by states’ monopoly. This, in turn, can lead to a net decrease in the states’ ability in the production and dissemination of information and an increase in their responsiveness. The internet can also be used to expose and challenge centralized power.

Third, there is what might be called the ‘digital dissent’ theory. According to James Fielder (2012), the internet promotes anti-regime dissent in authoritarian states due to three interrelated factors: distance, decentralization and interaction. The internet provides a low-cost communication unlimited by the distance. In its architecture, the internet is a decentralized medium, “where no one is in control”, as Thomas Friedman (cited in Zakaria, 2003, p. 2) puts it.

On the other side are cyber-pessimists, who ardently believe that the internet doesn’t promote democracy and that, in fact, it might hurt democracy.<sup>3</sup> Manners of usage by the state and several non-state actors such as religious institutions, corporations and thought-leader individuals determine the internet’s role in democracy promotion. Evgeny Morozov (2011, p. 253), a prominent author on digital technology, was speaking for many when he lamented the “assumption that more connections and more networks necessarily lead to more freedom or more democracy” as cyber-utopianism.

In between these two views, there is the amplification theory, which strictly holds the view, by analogy, that for whosoever has, to her shall be added, but whosoever has not, from her shall be taken away even that she has. In this view, the internet doesn’t provide a condition for democracy in itself. The internet’s role is reframed in terms of the context; that it only exacerbates the existing conditions. Thus, whereas for states and societies who have a glimpse of democracy, the internet will be a

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<sup>3</sup> The members of this school are not just scholars, but also authoritarian regimes all around the world. Note that the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dubbed social media “the worst menace to society” (Letsch, 2013).

democratizing force, for those who haven't any or who only have authoritarianism, the internet will be a tool of suppression.

### **DEMOCRATIZATION IN ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia's recent political history is dominated by attempts at democratizing the state and the wider society. For much of its history, the Ethiopian political system was dominated by the monarchy. The monarchy was abolished only in the wake of the popular Revolution of 1974. After hijacking the Revolution of 1974, the military junta, known commonly as the Derg, instituted what became known as "garrison socialism", a kind of bureaucratic-authoritarian military regime (Markakis, 1979). Nonetheless, the Derg proved to be more repressive than the regime it succeeded. The Ethiopian state was militarized. The precarious position of the Derg was legitimized by aliens and undeveloped ideologies. The new ideology of Ethiopian Socialism (a hodgepodge of Ethiopian nationalism and socialism) was introduced, but soon overturned by Scientific Marxism-Leninism.

Opposition to the military regime began almost as soon as it seized power, which later grew into a full-blown civil war. After years of struggle, the Derg regime was completely overthrown on May 28, 1991. On this day, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which was then a coalition of four rebel groups, took control of Addis Ababa, the country's capital and largest city.

The Ethiopian trajectory in the post-1991 period can well be understood by what González (2008, p. 5) described as "triple transitions" in the context of Central American countries. First, there was a transition from a civil war to peace, albeit a precarious one. Second, there was a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic rule. The endeavor was to transform the country from its totalitarian past to a democratic future. The EPRDF called for a national conference on peace and democracy. A Transitional Charter was adopted, establishing the Transitional Government of Ethiopia TGE. Finally, on December 8, 1994, the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) was ratified (Aaron, 2002; Kassahun, 2003). By the end of the transition period, Ethiopia had embraced electoral democracy. Third, there was a transition from a state-led to a relatively market-based economy. Thus, economically, the attempt was to build a market-oriented economy which the 'Washington Consensus' entails. Conducted in line with the external pressures from the international financial institutions, the economic exercise (which was at times painful) involved stabilization along free market lines, privatization and deregulation.

As democracy was the most acceptable form of government by the time EPRDF came to power (and at the end of the Cold War), it was rather impossible for the new

government to deny it (Kassahun, 2003, p. 120). Despite the “discursive shift” of theoretical espousal of democracy in its form, in practice the EPRDF oppose the substance of liberal democracy (Bach, 2011, p. 642). Thus, notwithstanding the fact that Ethiopia continues to hold periodic elections, the basic rights of citizens have been suppressed. It turns out, then, that despite all the hopes and expectations that EPRDF’s rise to power or the Constitution created, the record is still on the negative. According to Freedom House, Ethiopia is one of the most unfree countries in the world, with a continuing poor performance on human rights and democracy (FreedomHouse, 2017)<sup>4</sup>.

In fact, in any measure or in almost every regard, democracy is endangered. In terms of press freedom, for instance, the press was freed from the age-old censorship as early as 1992. The constitutional abolition of censorship made free expression of thought possible but the heyday of press freedom was not to last long. Many media organizations and journalists were either suspended or barred from the profession. Shutdowns of media outlets were exacerbated in the wake of the violence that followed the 2005 election (Stremlau, 2011). What was left was state-owned or EPRDF-inclined or –sponsored media such as Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, Fana Broadcasting Corporate, *Addis Zemen*, *The Reporter*, or *Zami FM*. Censorship, despite prohibited constitutionally, continued, albeit in a different form. Journalists have been jailed, or forced to leave their country for political reasons (Freedom House, 2017). The existing level of censorship has “stifled [Ethiopia’s] press” (Washington Post, 2015).

In terms of elections, the Ethiopian experience since 1991 can be deemed a grand failure. In accordance with the constitutional provisions, the first general election was held in 1995. The EPRDF won the majority in the 547-seat Ethiopian Parliament. The second was held in 2000, at a time when ‘brothers [were] at war’, i.e. the Ethiopian-Eritrean war. The third, by far the most contested election, was held in 2005. In 2010, the fourth general election was held. The fifth and so far the last and the least contested general election was held in 2015 (Merera, 2011; Arriola & Lyons, 2016).

As if the case with many of the elections on the African continent, none of these elections result in leadership changes. In fact, the *de jure* multiparty nature of the system is now effectively changed into a *de facto* one-party rule. The EPRDF, which claimed it had won all of the general elections, represents itself as a ‘dominant party’ and speculates about ruling the country for the decades to come (Asnake, 2009; Merera, 2011). Thus, despite the elections, the Ethiopian government has been ignoring the constitution that it itself endorsed, denying the Ethiopian people of their

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<sup>4</sup> The *Freedom House*’s “Not Free” status designates a country “where basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically denied” (Freedom House, 2012, p. 4).

natural rights and liberties (Freedom House, 2017). These elections did not usually manifest people's participation. They are often dismissed as nothing more than window-dressing for EPRDF's hegemonic and authoritarian governance (Abbink, 2014).

Related to this is the weakness and fragmentation of opposition politics (Asnake, 2011). The divided opposition was also rather ineffective in gaining any concessions from the regime. Beyond the party politics, the informal movement of the Ethiopian Muslims has been a challenge to the government. According to the 2007 population census, Ethiopia is home to about 25,037,646 Muslims, making up almost 34% of the population (Central Statistical Authority, 2007). Nevertheless, the movement was largely limited only to Addis Ababa and thus did not effectively challenge the government (Abbink, 2014).

The current Ethiopian government tolerates no dissent. A proven use of force allowed the regime to use repression in periods of political crisis, such as after the 2005 elections and the 2016 protests. Any form of opposition is suppressed. Critics continue to be thrown to jail in the name of anti-terrorism. Those who are not jailed are often labeled as criminals and subversive (Gagliardone, 2016). One of the most important gadgets that the government (especially the late premier Meles Zenawi) used routinely is labeling (Kassahun, 2003, p. 137). In fact, political labeling has its roots in Ethiopia with the student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bahru, 2014). The government lamented its critics as anti-Charter (during the Charter's day), chauvinists, neo-liberals, anti-peace, anti-people, anti-development, rent-seeker, street-gang, terrorist, extremists and more. But, these were rather scapegoating mechanisms and none of this amounted to real terrorism, extremism or neo-liberal tendencies.

The student body, the traditionally politically active part of the Ethiopian society (Bahru, 2014), did not rise in active opposition to the EPRDF government. In fact, a student opposition began in the early 2000s in Addis Ababa, only to be quickly aborted. There were also some student activities around the country, but, when compared with the last six decades of contemporary Ethiopian history, student activism is now in decline in the post-1991 Ethiopia. It is in the broader context of the weakening and decline of traditional forms of political opposition and the limitations of the 'political space' under the state-led authoritarianism that the political use of the internet shall be analyzed.

### **WHAT HAS THE INTERNET DONE SO FAR?**

The coming to power of the EPRDF coincided with the 'globalization of the internet' in the early 1990s. However, it was not until the early 2000s that Ethiopia's



rush to join the ‘information superhighway’ began in earnest. The internet made its first entrance in Ethiopia in the late 1990s. In fact, as early as 1993, there were ‘internet-like’ electronic communication systems, spearheaded by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Freedom House, 2011). By the late 1990s, pioneering attempts were also made at providing internet services by the non-state actors, such as the British Council (Gagliardone, 2016). These initial efforts, however, “were blocked or marginalized by the government” (Gagliardone, 2016, p. 42). These initiatives were later appropriated by the government. Accordingly, the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation ETC, the state-owned telecommunications company being the sole Internet Service Provider ISP in the country, established national networks, the first of which were fixed lines.

Since its arrival on the Ethiopian scene, the internet has widened the Ethiopian public sphere. Internet usage and actors on the internet in Ethiopia have seen massive increments during the course of the last two decades. According to the Internet World Stats, from an estimated population size of 104,344,901, there are now an estimated 11,538,000 internet users in Ethiopia (as of March 31, 2017), with one of the lowest global level of penetration (in terms of general population) of 11.1%. Out of these, 4,500,000 are Facebook subscribers. What is fascinating is the average growth of the internet, which is one of the highest in Africa. The number of internet users as of March 2000 was 10,000. From 2000 to 2017, internet usage has grown at an average of 115,280.0% (IWS, 2017). In fact, the rapid growth of internet penetration and usage might be seen as quite a new development in terms of the traditionally prevalent ‘technophobic’ attitude. Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, introduction of and adaptation to ‘Western’ technologies was always faced with fierce resistance. Now, the internet is embraced principally by professionals and students. This seems the reason as to why the social media features of the internet are often welcomed by Ethiopian internet users. In particular, the Millennials are increasingly using the internet (Christian, 2016). First generation of ICT start-ups, including internet cafes and computer hardware stores, are also making their appearances.

Thus, in the light of this, what has been done so far on/by using the internet in terms of democratization? First, as the scholar Nicole Stremlau (2011) observed, the EPRDF has “...embarked on ambitious efforts to shape the internet in ways that are beneficial for the state” (p. 723). Similarly, the media scholar Iginio Gagliardone (2016) has also noted that the internet was used as an instrument in support of the national project of EPRDF. This statist usage of the internet manifested itself in the development of several ICT initiatives in e-government and e-democracy. In this regard, mention must be made of the development of *WoredaNet*, which is grounded on the government’s assumption that ICT helps in deepening the process of democratization and good governance. A government-run network initiated in 2003 and implemented since



2005, *WoredaNet* provides ICT services to federal, regional and (more than 900) local governments, with the aim of improving state capacity and ensuring transparency. Nevertheless, the practical application of the *Woreda Net* has not succeeded in lessening the distance between the government and the public. According to Stremlau (2011, p. 723), continued centralization of power and asserting the presence of the central power in the peripheries of the state is *the raison d'être* of the government's use of the internet.

Second, the internet has enlarged the Ethiopian public sphere. At the outset, the public sphere is understood here to mean "a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them" (Hauser, 1999, p. 61). As far as Ethiopia is concerned, this discursive space has widened due to the internet. In this regard, the internet has been used as an alternative source and means of information and communication, leading to what Foucault (1980) described as the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (p. 81). The internet has been providing some light and has had some success in keeping the citizens informed, as well as opening and pluralizing the flows of information. In this way, the internet has enabled an appropriation and countering of the state-governed Ethiopian public sphere.

The internet has also served as a forum of discussion and reflection on public affairs. It makes the representation of ordinary citizens' disparate viewpoints possible. Thus, it is a new site for the production and reproduction of public opinion. 'Public opinion' is *freely* created and recreated and circulated online. Its creation is often mediated by opinion leaders, bloggers and commentators. But, there are also the comments and replies of 'those without a name'. When open exchange on equal footing is not possible, the creation of public opinion would often take on the form of polemics and satires, often directed against the government or other public figures including prominent sportsmen and artists. This is in line with the case of the emergence of the bourgeoisie public sphere in the early eighteenth century Europe (Habermas, 1991, pp. 14-26).

However, the discussions and reflections *per se* do not create social and political changes. Thus, to have a genuine impact on democratization, the internet needs to be used as an instrument of meaningful actions. Democratic theory is underpinned by the participation of informed citizens. In terms of fostering actions, therefore, the internet has increased, albeit to a limited extent, political participation and empowered ordinary citizens in Ethiopia in two respects.

First, it has strengthened civil society. As long ago as the nineteenth century, the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville underlined the necessity of civil societies

for the well-functioning of democracy. In his formulation, as it does in contemporary political research, a vibrant independent media is seen as necessary for the strengthening of civil societies (Howard, 2003, p. 32). In Ethiopia, the internet does not create civil society. Civil societies of various sorts have indeed long been in existence in Ethiopia. Thus, what does the internet do for civil societies in Ethiopia? Notably, the internet improved their problem-identification and agenda-setting capacity. In the internet, civil societies can share information, educate the people and monitor current developments of their concern; whether they are local, regional and/or global. From the perspective of the emerging ‘alternative media’ studies (Atton, 2002, pp. 133-138), the internet itself can rightly be considered as a civil society. Significant in this regard are works on rights advocacy and public policy lobbying and emergence of several online communities. An important case might be the 2012 public outcry over the ban and strict control of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) such as Skype, Google Talk and Viber, which followed the May 24, 2012 draft *Proclamation on Telecom Fraud Offences*, which allegedly criminalizes the use of these media (Argaw, 2012; Daniel, 2012).

Secondly, the internet has facilitated social mobilization. Two recent instances are provided below. Perhaps, the first major case of internet-mediated popular mobilization was the anti-Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) demonstrations in April 2015. On April 19, 2015, the ISIS terror group released a shocking video showing the killing of 30 Ethiopians in Libya. Internet users in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian diaspora around the world mounted an online campaign criticizing the government’s response which was nothing but a declaration of a three-day national mourning (Al-Jazeera, 2015). Internet activists called for anti-ISIS and anti-government demonstrations. This all came a mere month before Ethiopia held its fifth parliamentary elections; the first to take place since the 2012 death of long-time leader Meles Zenawi. Even with all the censorship efforts, the internet campaign brought the matter forth to nationwide attention and tempted the government to ‘hijack’ the popular demonstrations in its favor.

More recently, protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions, which one commentator described as “the largest and longest demonstrations in recent history” (Neamin, 2016), were perpetuated by online campaigning. In the Oromia region, following perceived encroachments by the Addis Ababa City Integrated Master Plan into the region, the youth poured onto the streets in protest. In fact, there were similar protests in 2014. But, unlike the 2014 protests, the 2015/16 protests were characterized by effective use of the mass media and the internet, especially social media (Awol Allo, 2016).

To the Oromo crisis were added protests in the Amhara region, which began on July

12, 2016 (Hamle 5, 2008 EC) in Gondar. The 2016 crisis in Gondar is one of the most destructive civil disturbances in Ethiopia's recent history. The immediate cause of the violence and public protests were the issue of boundary demarcation disputes between Amhara and Tigray. The protests, however, spread to other parts of the region, mainly to Gojjam. It turns out the protests were also anti-government. In these protests, the internet played a critical role by allowing the protesters to debate, exchange ideas, spread their messages further than ever before and bring together large rallies within short notice.

The government describes these protests as heedless and leaderless (Schemm, 2016). Indeed, the protests were without a central organizing force. The use of the internet has made the emergence of a singular 'head' difficult. Most importantly, however, the internet has diminished the significance of any such head. Thus, by cutting off the King's head, to use Foucault's words, the internet has led to more democratic and participatory protests than ever before occurred in the past.

However, the internet was used not only by the state and by the society-against-the state. The whole society continued to be targeted online, creating at least a 'virtual' social change. In Guobin Yang's (2009) distinction of forms of online activism, these forms of online activism can be described as being both cultural and social. According to Yang (2009, p. 33), cultural activism refers to online activities in which the main concerns are societal values, morality, lifestyle and identity. Social activism "focuses on such problems as corruption, environmental degradation and the rights of disadvantaged groups".

The internet can also be a site for knowing and learning about democracy. The political scientist Finkel (2003) noted that

[...] the democratic transformation of an entire society's *attitudes and values* [emphasis added] is the work of decades and requires the action of large structural forces, such as economic modernization and generational succession, as well as sustained experience with democratic institutions and responsible behavior by opposition and governing elites in turning over power and the like. (p. 139)

It is often argued that the internet can be a stimulus to bring about such a change in citizens' basic values. This is especially true in the Ethiopian context, where the internet is already impacting social orientations and expectations, specifically of the youth, women and men.

Meanwhile, the internet has also negative consequences. Or, to be exact, the way the internet has been used so far has created some pitfalls. The single most important

problem which is often associated with the internet is in increasing social polarization. The media fragmentation on the internet has negatively affected national consensus even on issues of key importance. To be exact, the internet did not create political polarization. As Gagliardone (2016) remarked “the internet was hijacked by the old generation”. He pointed out clearly that “the new media, rather than being seized as an opportunity for a new generation leaders and advocates to test innovative ideas..., were instead initially captured by ‘old politics’, going back to grievances rooted in the 1960s and 1970s” (Gagliardone, 2016, p. 47).

Misinformation and the dissemination of fake news are other challenges that impede the internet’s ability at bringing about democratization. This, in turn, has poisoned civic engagement (Christian, 2017a). A sort of internet bullying sets a dangerous precedent where individual rights are grossly violated and mobs now feel free to impose their convictions on others.

### **WHAT COULD THE INTERNET DO IN THE FUTURE?**

Given the balance sheet of internet’s limited role in promoting democratization in Ethiopia so far, what would be its prospects? There are several factors that will affect its role in the future. First is the most important issue of internet access itself. As the number of internet users grows (2.9% in 2014 but 12% in 2015), its role in democratization might see a leap forward. Nonetheless, this all depends upon its accessibility in the first place. According to the Freedom House (2011, 2016), there are several obstacles to internet access in Ethiopia. Infrastructurally, the internet, despite all the massive increments, has not yet penetrated well into the Ethiopian archipelago. Spatially, it remains limited mainly to urban and semi-urban areas. However, economically, the internet is not also an easily accessible ‘commodity’. Indeed, internet in Ethiopia is very expensive. As of 2015, Ethiopia is the world’s 29th most expensive place to get a fixed broadband connection (ITU, 2016).

Secondly, the internet’s role in Ethiopia’s democratization will be determined by the practical application of freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is a constitutionally guaranteed right in Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup> Thus far, however, the rating of internet freedom is still abysmally low, even by the average African standard (Freedom House, 2016).

Related to the above point are the state’s attempts at controlling cyber sphere. While at

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<sup>5</sup> Article 29 (2) of the Constitution of the FDRE provides that “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice”.

times the Ethiopian government had been obliged to respond to public opinion expressed on the internet, it, however, desperately wants to assert its dominance on the production and dissemination of politically sensitive information on the internet. To this end, the government used both ‘technical’ and ‘psychological or soft’ mechanisms of control (Fielder, 2012, p. 4).

Technically, if inconsistently, it censored web contents and blocked unwelcomed sites (Freedom House, 2011, 2016; Christian, 2017b). In 2012, the Ethiopian government blocked access to the Tor network (Moskvitch, 2012). On October 15, 2016, a nationwide state of emergency (SoE) was declared in response to the public protests in Oromia and Amhara regions. Among the elements of this infamous SoE was the ban of social media. Massive online surveillances were also conducted (Human Rights Watch, 2014). The key state agency allegedly conducting these surveillances is the Information Network Security Agency INSA.

Are technical control mechanisms of this sort successful? In 2011, the Freedom House noted that “circumvention tools are rarely employed, and most people simply forego accessing websites that are blocked”. Recently, however, in response to the blocking of the social media sites, the internet community began an extensive use of proxy servers, anonymizers and other censorship circumvention tools such as *Psiphon* to maintain information flows. Hence, the technical controls that the state engineered could be effectively resisted. Online anonymity is also taken as a way of resisting state authority.

Again, along with the technical control mechanisms, there are also soft or psychological control mechanisms. Accordingly, those not censored or blocked might be accused of terrorism, under the infamous Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009. The government has prosecuted and imprisoned people on the basis of their online activities.

The online activities might also be de-legitimized offline. The news of the 2011 Arab uprisings were, for instance, received in Ethiopia with much enthusiasm that such a violent overthrow of government seemed eminent in Ethiopia. Social media activists began to wonder whether they could emulate the revolutions (Freedom House, 2012). These were mainly propagated by a Facebook page titled ‘*Beka*’ (Enough!). The state-owned media acted in full force in undermining the successes of these movements. EPRDF’s theoretical organ, *Addis Ra’eye*, published a review of John R. Bradley’s book ‘*After the Arab Spring: How the Islamists Hijack the Arab Spring*’, urging Ethiopians not to repeat the revolutions of the Arab youth. Another sort of ‘soft’ control is the use by the government of apologetic authors. According to Freedom House (2011), “the authorities use regime apologists, paid commentators and pro-

government websites to proactively manipulate the online news and information landscape” (p. 138). This can well be encapsulated in the critical notion of ‘manufacturing consent’, where the “news media is mobilised (manipulated even) into supporting government policy” (Robinson, 1999, p. 301). Thus, rather than being democratized by the internet, Ethiopia might pragmatically use the internet as a propaganda tool.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of the internet on democratization has recently got both theoretical and empirical attention. This paper focused on the role of the internet in the democratization of the Ethiopian state and society. The paper considered 1991 as a watershed as it was in 1991 that Ethiopia’s incumbent regime (the EPRDF) came to power. Accordingly, it was found that the internet’s presence has increased enormously since the early 2000s. Based on the empirical discussions presented above, two major conclusions come forth. The first is that the internet’s impact in democratization of the Ethiopian state and society has been limited so far. The reasons and contributing factors for this low impact of the internet are mainly endogenous, rooted in the structure of the state and society. Second, the prospect of internet’s role cannot be predicted. The nature of its impact will vary depending upon several factors: national and global. By using the liberty of analogy, then, the internet should not be seen as having the *Midas* touch, that everything the internet does or what the people do on the internet would be successful. Or, the internet is not like the legendary philosopher’s stone, the imaginary substance that was thought in the past to have the power to change any other metal into gold. The still-evolving political (ab)use of the internet will be determined by the dynamics of actors with their own specific preferences and governmental regulations. The prospects of successful use of the internet will be determined by several factors including efficient access, genuine freedom of expression, responsive and able political leadership and the building of national consensus.

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## Music and Democracy in Ethiopia: A Content Analysis of Two Amharic Songs

Solomon Girma<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Music influences human life greatly. Likewise, democratic and political conditions pave the way to the production of music/songs. Oftentimes, such songs carry political or protest themes. Folk songs, patriotic songs or songs of protest have long been practiced all over the world and reception of music by almost all people makes them accessible to self or group expression. The case in Ethiopia is similar. The present-day status of Ethiopia has made me a witness to two sides of the same coin: achievements to be celebrated and shortcomings to be criticized. Accordingly, both sides have been represented by songs. The most popular songs instilling unity towards the construction of the Great Renaissance Dam (a 6,000 mega watt hydro-electric power plant) in Ethiopia are good examples of praise songs. On the other hand, protest songs were also part of the political sphere reflecting people's dissatisfaction and concerns. Therefore, I examine the contents of these songs and assess them as to how we all learn from them.*

*Since these songs were produced widely and in various Indigenous languages, this paper is specifically designed to thoroughly interpret the lyrics of two songs in Amharic. For the purpose of contrast, 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) by Anonymous has been selected to demonstrate praise songs and Yihune Belay's 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down) has been selected to show the other side of the coin. As a result, this paper examines the role of music in the Ethiopian democratic tradition, the basics of freedom of speech and democracy and compare and contrasts the content of the songs produced in Ethiopia since 2015 (the last general election).*

**Keywords:** music, democracy, protest, freedom of speech, Ethiopia, censorship

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Meheret Selassie (2016) juxtaposed art and society: art is the reflection of society. Furthermore, music has always been an instrument to express anguish, dissatisfaction or to rally people for a specific change (Lynskey, 2010). Moreover, Eyayu (1994) added to the juxtaposition of art and society. For him, “Art is as old as man himself. There has always been a reciprocal relationship between art and society” (Eyayu, 1994, p. 21). Apart from their aesthetic values, songs, as an important branch of art, have also assumed remarkable social roles in history. They have served as a medium to express both social and political resentment, arouse feelings of nationalism, thanks and pledges to God, as well as to convey messages of joy and sorrow. Songs are part of the folk culture and serve as a means by which individuals and groups ritualize, organize and make sense of their day to day experiences. As it is indicated in the above statement, music not only addresses the routines of life but it also deals with serious subjects like democracy.

Humphreys (2013) reported the great role played by music in the establishment of the world’s earliest democracies. According to the English Oxford Living Dictionaries (2017), democracy is defined as a system whereby people or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives, form a system of government. Even now, this role venerates the association between music and the middle class. These popular musical styles and practices not only reflected, but helped create a more democratic society. With the spread of democracy, it still “reflects the interests of ordinary people”, including improved civil rights “for previously disenfranchised groups such as women, children” and various racial, ethnic and religious minorities.

Eyayu (1994) stated that the legacy of music is undoubtedly immense in Ethiopia; a country of long traditions. Clarifying the role of music in Ethiopia, Meheret Selassie (2016) is of the same opinion that musicians have always been instruments of revolution in Ethiopia because they artistically depict the exact mood of the people and critique the government when needed.

Therefore, this paper deals with the concepts discussed above and attempts to answer the following questions. What kind of messages do Ethiopian praise and protest song artists convey? Who do praise and protest songs in Ethiopia correspond to? Are protest songs all about remonstrance? These questions will be answered by analyzing the lyrics of both ‘ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ’ (Vote for EPRDF) released by EPRDF as an example for praise songs and Yihune Belay’s ‘ሰከን በል’ (Calm down) as an example for protest songs.

### **THE AFFINITY BETWEEN MUSIC AND DEMOCRACY**

Music is a mirror reflecting life: the joy, sorrow and misery of man. According to Adegbite (2012), “music drama and visual arts are seen as potent avenue for the

articulation of cultures and are, therefore, of great importance for they are situational and psychologically conceived” (p. 20). Moreover, music can be used to articulate political and democratic issues. I believe that one of the targets of making music is to make money; however, there are a number of songs produced for different purposes. The best example of these are protest songs that are sung and distributed in an attempt to address political issues.

It is true that music and democracy are two different entities and so long as economic conditions impose on men and women to constantly work hard, so long will democracy be kept from its full musical heritage. Music demands leisure and a conducive environment. However, I believe that combining these two concepts (music and democracy) and making the most of them is crucial for artists and members of societies to express their viewpoints.

### **MUSIC AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN ETHIOPIA**

Ashenafi (1975) recounted that in Europe, “the tradition of bards, skalds and minstrels flourished from the middle ages” (p. 47). The Ethiopian version of this tradition is also age old. Starting from the time of Azmaris (traditional singers in Ethiopia) (though there is no historical record or material evidence as to how old the history of Azmaris is), music has served both governments and societies. Tigist Girma, an Amharic folklore analyst, stated in her investigation of Azamari lyrics in Gondar that “folk songs in some communities are forwarded to comment on the rulers, the audience and to praise the same subjects” (Tigist, 2010, p. 18).

Since 2015 (the last Ethiopian general election), a number of praise and protest songs have been released. Based on the author’s observation, praise songs celebrating government policies and accomplishments in Ethiopia during the last two plus decades were considered to be patriotic, were encouraged and are often played on the state-owned media. Genet Masresha’s ‘አባይ፣ ጭስ አልባው ነዳጅ’ (Abay: The smokeless source of energy), Gete Anley’s ‘ይሄው መጣ ቀንሽ’ (now is your time) and Fikraddis Nekatibeb and Abebe Berhane’s ‘እንሂድ ወደ አባይ’ (Let us go to Abay) are some of the praise songs about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. According to Lynskey (2010), praise songs were never subjects of censorship.

On the other hand, when describing songs that do not celebrate government policies and accomplishments in Ethiopia, Kristin Orgeret (2008) stated that there exists government pressure on the transmission of protest songs and on any song of a protesting artist on state-owned media. The fact that most protest song artists are part of the Ethiopian Diaspora and can escape the censorship adds to the very notions of protest songs and freedom of expression. These restrictions, I believe, are present all

over the world under the guise of being a menace to existing political orders.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses content analysis. Nachmias and Nachmias (1976) define content analysis as an examination of a text's message to arrive at a conclusion. The to be analysed can be content associated with any text or multimedia material (The University of Sheffield, 2017). In addition, Kerlinger (1986) defined content analysis as a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

In preparing this paper, relevant theorizations such as Lulseged's (1994) *Social, economic and political discontent in Ethiopia as reflected in contemporary Amharic songs* (mid 1950s-mid 1970s) and Orgeret's (2008) *When will the daybreak come?* Popular music and political processes in Ethiopia have been reviewed in the general theoretical framework of music and democracy. Yet, I found them to be one sided. As a mitigating technique, I depended mainly on the texts/lyrics of both praise and protest songs. In order for me to show the use of music as a means of expression for various purposes, one song from praise songs and one song from protest songs have been analyzed. I selected the songs based on their popularity and the number of issues that each song treats. Therefore, the two songs, 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF) by the (EPRDF) and Yihune Belay's 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down) show the general political and democratic atmosphere in Ethiopia during the last three years since the last general election was held in 2015. The lyrics of the two Amharic songs were translated into English by me.

### ANALYSIS ON 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (VOTE FOR EPRDF)

'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF) by the EPRDF was produced at the eve of the 2015 Ethiopian general election. It was used as part of the election campaign of EPRDF and focused on celebrating EPRDF accomplishments of the last two decades. The song generally praises EPRDF as the precursor of the success and prosperity of Ethiopia. Ever since the introduction of the multiparty system by the EPRDF led government in Ethiopia, five general elections have taken place in Ethiopia so far. The irony, in the following extract of song lyrics is that a person needs to decide his/her taste of what he/she eats implies that EPRDF is of the best option people have in the country. Amongst all the existing political parties in Ethiopia, EPRDF remains the strongest and democratic party in the country.

The following three lines of the song hail the option from multiple parties that people have to choose from.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ምግብ ሞልቶ ቢትረፈረፍ ምን ቢፈጥር የዐይን አዋጅ ተስማሚውን እንዲበላ ሰው ለጤናው እንደሚበጅ	Even if everything is edible, Though everything is mouthwatering, A person always chooses his favorite.

*Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.*

According to Joselow (2012), EPRDF, led by the late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, dubbed “The Visionary”, is credited with bringing economic development to the country. The government had ushered in mega projects throughout the country; pertaining to construction of dams, roads, universities, hospitals and other infrastructure which benefit all Ethiopians. By the same token, a number of local and foreign commentators witness that EPRDF is at its best in terms of eradicating poverty and registering growth. The following verse restates the above argument.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ለራስ ለወገን ላገሩ የማይግ ተስፋን ያለመ መረን ይመርጣል በካርዱ መብቱን እየተጠቀመ	One who is an optimist Votes for his/her rightful leader

*Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The following lines inform listeners that there are a number of political parties in Ethiopia though, the incumbent party presents itself as the best and only option people have in the Ethiopian political course. In other words, Dagim Afework (2013) stated that “Ethiopia has never seen a light of democratization during the times of both the Imperial regime and the socialist Derg... However, it doesn’t mean that no attempts have been made to bring democratic reforms in the country” (p. 30). The following excerpt celebrates the EPRDF’s political success.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ኢህአዴግ የሀገር ዘላቂ ልማት ኢህአዴግ የዲሞክራሲ መሰረት	EPRDF- conductor of sustainable development EPRDF- pioneer of democracy

*Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The following two excerpts reiterate that EPRDF is a democratically elected government and that it is held in high esteem by many.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ኢህአዴግ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ምንጭ ኢህአዴግ ሁሌም ህዝባዊ ተመራጭ	EPRDF- pioneer of Ethiopia's renaissance EPRDF- a democratically elected government

*Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.*

Amharic Transcript	Translation
የኢትዮጵያችን ህዳሴ የተስፋ ቀን እንዲነጋ ትርጉም ላለው የህይወት ለውጥ ሌትና ቀን የሚተጋ ከምርጦች የተመረጠ ለያንዳንዳችን ተስማሚ ፊትም ወደፊት ኢህአዴግ ያገር ጥቅም አስቀዳሚ	For us to see a new dawn, EPRDF strives all-day every day. The ultimate choice of many That propels the nation to prosperity

*Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The next verse defends the government's success in planning creative, engaging and effective policies. This, of course, shows how hard the EPRDF led government is trying to lessen unemployment and eradicate poverty.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
በፖሊሲና እቅዶች አዲስ ሀሳብ ያፈለቀ ህዝቦችን ካጥናፍ እስካናፍ ለልማት ያነቃነቀ	Introducing new comprehensive policies Has involved its citizens in development

*Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.*

Following the fall of the Derg regime, people started to enjoy many human and democratic rights that they had previously been deprived. Shimelis Kassa (2015), a lecturer at Arbaminch University, stated that “For just over a decade, the EPRDF government in Ethiopia has been attempting to implement a novel form of government” (p. 176). Likewise, this has created a relatively peaceful setting in which people can work and prosper.



Amharic transcript	Translation
ያብረኛት ዲፕሎማሲ የሰላም ሰርዖ ማሳያ ኢህአዴግ ነው ባለራዕይ ባዲሲቷ ኢትዮጵያ	Workshop of diplomacy and harmony EPRDF is a visionary party in the brand-new nation

Extract from 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF); translation: Solomon Girma.

### YIHUNE BELAY'S 'ሰከን በል' (CALM DOWN)

What makes Yihune Belay's 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down) a protest song is that it condemns the response of the Ethiopian government to the demonstrations that took place during the unrest in 2016. The BBC (2016) considers in its article on the questions "What is behind Ethiopia's wave of protests?" the cause of the unrest as the accumulation of years of frustration from ethnic groups who have been marginalized. Moreover, the New York based Human Rights Watch (cited in BBC, 2016) stated that more than 400 people died in clashes with security forces during the summer protests of 2016. Following the recent political unrest in Ethiopia, a state of emergency was put in place on October 9, 2016. The Ethiopian embassy (2016) in Washington, D.C. issued an article clarifying the need for state of emergency in Ethiopia and that the unrest had resulted in an alarming threat to the country's peace and stability. Though the unrest was short lived because of the strict measures enforced, such as; the declaration of state of emergency and multiple arrests of protesters by the Ethiopian government, the tradition of protest song production is surfacing and it has drawn the attention of many singers. The following are among the artists who released singles: Fasil Demoz's *25 amet* (25 years), Wendi Mak's *Ethiopia yeman nat?* (Who owns Ethiopia?), Shambel Belayneh's *Embi bel* (Say no), Yihunie Belay's *Seken bel* (Calm down), Natty Man's *Ahun Tenekahu* (Now I am provoked). These songs are grouped as protest songs for they condemn the measures taken by the Ethiopian government against protesters. In addition, these songs are very popular amongst Ethiopians who are dissatisfied by the current Ethiopian government. Thus, based on my own observations, I selected Yihune Belay's 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down) as it is popular amongst the public and it discusses the varied grievances of the public.

Yihune Belay is an Ethiopian music performer. He now lives with his family in the U.S.A. He has produced many romantic and praise songs that are still popular and have local appeal. Due to this, the most recent protest song he released has caught the attention of many. According to Bangura (1994), "most ethnic conflicts are caused by competition for state resources" (p. 10) and these conflicts invoke identity and other related issues. Yihune Belay's *Seken Bel* reiterates Bangura's arguments reflected by protesters and tells us his concerns in the following excerpt.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ማንነት የራስ ነው ሀይማኖት የግል ነው ሀገር የጋራ ነው ቁልፍና ማሰሪያው ኢትዮጵያዊነት ነው	Though we have different identities, Ethiopia is the melting pot

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The connection between this protest song and Ethiopian New Year is one significant point in Yihune's 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down). It is customary that Ethiopians make a wish on the eve or first day of every New Year and it is this way that he presented his New Year's resolution. He wishes that all would come together and that God would make our sufferings disappear. The following lines from the song are worth noting:

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ባዲሱ ዐመት ባዲሱ ዐመት የለም መሞት አበባ አደይ አበባ አደይ ሞት ለገዳይ በመስከረም በመስከረም ሰላም ሰላም	Let not a soul be killed in the New Year Let demise be for the slayer May peace be upon all of us in the New Year

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The following two verses condemn the use of force and violation of democratic rights. In addition, Yihune indicates that the wrongs the people complain about are critical, deep rooted and long-term. For a long time, the people have been crying out and most of their cries have not yet been answered. He calls for calmness and peace in the process of resolving issues and states that people should not be blamed for demanding justice.

Amharic transcript	Translation
ስሙት ወገኔን አትተኩሱበት እዩት ወገኔን አታፍጥጡበት ባዲሱ ዐመት አዲስ ብስራት(2)	Heed the People's demands; don't shoot them Solve the People's problems; don't hold grudges Let there be good news in the New Year

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ባዶ እጁን ነው የሚጮኸው ሰላማዊ ወንድምህ ነው ሰከን በሉ ህዝቤን ተውት ድምፁን ስሙት አትግደሉት	The protestors are unarmed They are demanding their rights be respected Thus, don't let them suffer And solve their problems

*Extracted from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); lyricist: Solomon Girma.*

Yihune satirizes the inequality between citizens and the fragile aspect of the relationship between the government and its people in the following verse. He then suggests that it is important to forget and forgive and concentrate on our future as a nation. Accordingly, the two most important messages that are conveyed through the verse are unity and forgiveness.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
አንዱ ካንዱ ሳይበልጥ አንዱ ካንዱ ሳያንስ አንዱ አንዱን ሳይገድለው ደምም ሳይፋሰስ በወላጁ ጥፋት ልጁ ሳይወቀስ ተባብሮ ተፋቅሮ ባንድነት መኖሩ ይጠቅመናል እንጂ ምንድን ነው ችግሩ	Consider none noble, Consider none minor, Let there be no killing Let there be no bloodshed. For the father's sins, The child isn't to blame. There is no wrong in living in unison It is a win-win solution.

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The following verse reminds listeners of Aesop's famous quotation, "United we stand, divided we fall". Yihune's symbolic presentation of the might of a lion opposed to a cobweb reveals the power the many ethnic groups have in the fight against injustice and the urgency of focusing on what Ethiopian have in common. For him, division equals demise.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
ድር እንኳን ቀጭኑ ድር እንኳን ለስላሳው ሲያብር ሲተባበር ይበልጣል ካንበሳው ስማኝ በጥሞና ልንገርህ ወገኔ መለያየት ሞት ነው ላንተም ሆነ ለኔ	Delicate a cobweb is though It's strong enough to stop a lion if the mesh is strong Listen to what I have to say; To be divided is detrimental

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

The following extract holds the message that the kind of relationship mentioned in the above extract needs to exist not only amongst the local people but amongst the locals and the Ethiopian Diaspora. Both sections of the society have a strong bond that brings them together at times of joy and adversity. Therefore, both parties must strive to create a Utopia, where all Ethiopians can live in freedom.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
በስደት ያለውም ወዳገሩ ገብቶ በነፃነት ሊኖር እንደልቡ ገብቶ እንደልቡ ወጥቶ ተማምሏል ህዝቧ ለንዴና ለሁሉ	The expats shall return and reunite And be able to travel to and fro, This is the people's oath

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

At this moment, Yihune seems to be convinced that it is only God who has all the solutions to the problems that exist in Ethiopia. He then concludes the song with prayers that God protects Ethiopia and its entire people from all types of adversities in life.

Amharic Transcript	Translation
እባክህ ጌታዬ ኢትዮጵያን ህዝቦቿን ጠብቃት የጦር መዛመቻ የጠለት መዛባቻ የመከራ መካተቻ ከመሆን አድናት አደራ እምዬን ኢትዮጵያን ጠብቃት	We entrust you God, to protect us Let Ethiopia not be a war front Let there not be hardship We entrust you God to protect our country

*Extract from 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down); translation: Solomon Girma.*

## CONCLUSION

It is important to understand that music plays many roles in propagating government agendas and criticizing governments' imperfections. Governments know the use of music and they seem to use it often. However, when it comes to protest songs, the governments tend to censor or ban the songs from being distributed and heard. 'ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ' (Vote for EPRDF) by the EPRDF and 'ሰከን በል' (Calm down) by Yihune Belay are examples of the two political spheres in Ethiopia. Based on the analysis, I was able to see that Amharic praise songs correspond to both the Ethiopian government and its people and protest songs relate to the people who are dissatisfied. Not every line of all protest songs is about vilification. In fact, protest songs have a lot in common with praise songs. Therefore, we should not exert all our energy and

resources in trying to find the differences between the songs. What is best is to glean strong messages from the songs and use them in improving the democratic and political conditions in Ethiopia. In this way only can music and democracy thrive. Therefore, the message is clear and simple -let both praise and protest songs be sang and be used to change people's lives for the better.

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## APPENDICES

### ‘ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ’ (Vote for EPRDF)

ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ ይምረጡ ይምረጡ  
 ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ ይምረጡ ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ምግብ ሞልቶ ቢትረፈረፍ  
 ምን ቢፈጥር የዐይን አዋጅ  
 ተስማሚውን እንዲበላ ሰው ለጤናው እንደሚበጅ  
 ለራስ ለወገን ላገሩ የማይግ ተስፋን ያለመ  
 መሪን ይመርጣል በካርዱ መብቱን እየተጠቀመ  
 ኢህአዴግ የሀገር ዘላቂ ልማት  
 ኢህአዴግ የዲሞክራሲ መሰረት  
 ኢህአዴግ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ምንጭ  
 ኢህአዴግ ሁሌም ህዝባዊ ተመራጭ  
 የኢትዮጵያችን ህዳሴ የተስፋ ቀን እንዲነጋ  
 ትርጉም ላለው የህይወት ለውጥ ሌትና ቀን የሚተጋ  
 ከምርጦች የተመረጠ ለያንዳንዳችን ተስማሚ  
 ፊትም ወደፊት ኢህአዴግ ያገር ጥቅም አስቀዳሚ  
 ኢህአዴግ የሀገር ዘላቂ ልማት  
 ኢህአዴግ የዲሞክራሲ መሰረት  
 ኢህአዴግ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ምንጭ  
 ኢህአዴግ ሁሌ ህዝባዊ ተመራጭ  
 ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ ይምረጡ ይምረጡ  
 ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ ይምረጡ ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ

ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ምግብ ሞልቶ ቢትረፈረፍ  
 ምን ቢፈጥር የዐይን አዋጅ  
 ተስማሚውን እንዲበላ ሰው ለጤናው እንደሚበጅ  
 ለራስ ለወገን ላገሩ የማይግ ተስፋን ያለመ  
 መሪን ይመርጣል በካርዱ መብቱን እየተጠቀመ  
 ኢህአዴግ የሀገር ዘላቂ ልማት  
 ኢህአዴግ የዲሞክራሲ መሰረት  
 ኢህአዴግ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ምንጭ  
 ኢህአዴግ ሁሌም ህዝባዊ ተመራጭ  
 በፖሊሲና እቅዶች አዲስ ሀሳብ ያፈለቀ  
 ህዝቦችን ካጥናፍ እስካናፍ ለልማት ያነቃነቀ  
 ያብሮነት ዲፕሎማሲ የሰላም ሰርቶ ማሳያ  
 ኢህአዴግ ነው ባለራዕይ ባዲሲቷ ኢትዮጵያ  
 ኢህአዴግ የሀገር ዘላቂ ልማት  
 ኢህአዴግ የዲሞክራሲ መሰረት  
 ኢህአዴግ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ምንጭ  
 ኢህአዴግ ሁሌም ህዝባዊ ተመራጭ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ  
 ይምረጡ ኢህአዴግን ይምረጡ



**‘ስከን በል’ (Calm down) by Yihune Belay**

አረ ተው ተው በለው  
ተው በለው ተው በለው  
ማንነቴን ብሎ አደባባይ ወጥቶ  
ባዶ እጁን እያየው ሲያልፍ ለሚያልፍ ቀን  
ወንድሙን ወንድሙ አልሞ ገደለው  
ለሁዬ ለሁዬ ለሁ ለሁ ለሁዬ  
ማንነት የራስ ነው ሀይማኖት የግል ነው  
ሀገር የጋራ ነው ቁልፍና ማሰራያው ኢትዮጵያዊነት ነው  
ለሁዬ ለሁዬ ለሁ ለሁ ለሁዬ  
ባዲሱ ዐመት ባዲሱ ዐመት የለም መሞት(2)  
አበባ አደይ አበባ አደይ ሞት ለገዳይ (2)  
በመስከረም በመስከረም ሰላም ሰላም (2)  
የመስቀል ለታ የመስቀል ለታ ባንድ ገበታ (2)  
ባዲስ ዘመን ባዲስ ዘመን ይብቃ በለን(2)  
ያ ወገኔ ዛሬ ምን አለ አሆ  
አትንኩኝ አለ  
ያ ወገኔ ዛሬ ምን አለ አሆ  
አትንኩኝ አለ  
ማንነቴን መልሱ እያለ አሆ  
ሲዘምር ዋለ  
ማንነቴን መልሱ እያለ አሆ  
ሲዘምር ዋለ  
ማንነቴን አልሸጥም አለ አሆ  
አያሻኝም አለ  
ማንነቴን አልሸጥም አለ አሆ  
አያሻኝም አለ  
ስሙት ወገኔን አትተኩሱበት

እዩት ወገኔን አታፍጥጡበት  
ባዲሱ ዐመት አዲስ ብስራት(2)  
ሰከን ሰከን ሰከን  
ሰከን በል ሰከን ሰከን በል ሰከን  
ሰከን ማለት ሰከን ነው ጨዋነት ሰከን  
ሰከን ማለት ሰከን ነው ጀግንነት ሰከን  
ሰከን ወታደሩ ሰከን ሰከን በል ሰከን  
አፈሙዙን ሰከን ሰከን አርገው ሰከን  
ቃታህንም ሰከን እንዳትስበው ሰከን  
ባዶ እጁን ነው ሰከን የሚጮኸው ሰከን  
ሰላማዊ ሰከን ወንድምህ ነው ሰከን  
ሰከን በሉ ሰከን ህዝቤን ተውት ሰከን  
ድምፁን ስሙት ሰከን አትግደሉት ሰከን  
መንግስት በሀገሩ ሰከን በህዝቡ ላይተኩስ ሰከን  
ዘሀጢያት ይኩን ሰከን ውግዝ ከም አርፎስ ሰከን  
ሰከን በል ተው ሰከን  
ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን  
አንዲ ካንዱ ሳይበልጥ ሰከን  
አንዱ ካንዱ ሳያንስ ሰከን  
አንዱ አንዱን ሳይገድለው ሰከን  
ደምም ሳይፋሰስ ሰከን  
በወላጁ ጥፋት ሰከን  
ልጁ ሳይወቀስ ሰከን  
ተባብሮ ተፋቅሮ ሰከን ባንድነት መኖሩ ሰከን  
ይጠቅመናል እንጂ ሰከን ምንድን ነው ችግሩ ሰከን  
ሰከን በል ተው ሰከን  
ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን  
ሰከን በል ተው ሰከን

ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን  
ሰከን ሰከን ሰከን ሰከን  
ድር እንኳን ቀጭኑ ሰከን ድር እንኳን ለስላሳው ሰከን  
ሲያብር ሲተባበር ሰከን ይበልጣል ካንበሳው ሰከን  
ስማኝ በጥምና ሰከን ልንገርህ ወገኔ ሰከን  
መለያየት ሞት ነው ሰከን ላንተም ሆነ ለኔ ሰከን(2)  
ሰከን በል ሰከን ሰከን በል ሰከን ሰከን በልማ ሰከን  
ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን  
ከታሪካዊው ሰከን ከድንቅነሽ ሀገር ሰከን  
ከምዬ ኢትዮጵያ ሰከን ከሆደ ችግንጉርጉር ሰከን  
ቀይና ቀይ ዳማ ሰከን ጣይምና ጥቁር ሰከን  
ወርቀዘቦ ሆነን ሰከን አምረን ብንፈጠር ሰከን  
እንዴት እንለያይ ሰከን በቋንቋና በዘር ሰከን በቋንቋና በዘር ሰከን  
ሰከን በል ተው ሰከን ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን(2)  
ሰከን ሰከን ሰከን  
የወገን ጥያቄው ሰከን ክብሩ ተመልሶ ሰከን  
በሰላም ለመኖር ሰከን ክብሩ ተመልሶ ሰከን  
በስደት ያለውም ሰከን ወዳገሩ ገብቶ ሰከን  
በነፃነት ሊኖር ሰከን እንደልቡ ገብቶ ሰከን እንደልቡ ወጥቶ ሰከን  
ተማምሏል ህዝቧ ሰከን ላንዴና ለሁሌ ሰከን  
እልል እልል በሉ ሰከን እንዲፈታ ህልሜ ሰከን  
ሰከን በልማ ሰከን ሰከን በል ተው ሰከን ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን  
ሰከን በል ተው ሰከን ሰከን በል እንጂ ሰከን  
ሰከን ሰከን  
እባክህ ጌታዬ ሰከን ኢትዮጵያን ህዝቦቿን ሰከን ጠብቃት ሰከን  
የጦር መዛመቻ ሰከን የጦላት መዛበቻ ሰከን  
የመከራ መካተቻ ሰከን ከመሆን አድናት ሰከን  
አደራ ሰከን እምዬን ሰከን ኢትዮጵያን ጠብቃት ሰከን  
ሰከን ሰከን



This conference volume is a collection of papers that were presented at the conference “Cultures of Democracy in Ethiopia” that was held in Gondar in April 2017. The spirit and tenor of the essays assembled within this publication focus on the cultural metrics that underlie the diverse cultures and meanings of democracy. The issues addressed in this book involve topics ranging from dialogue, communication, democratization, vulnerable subjects, liberation, self-governing, indigenous concepts, public reasoning, intra-party democracy, conflict resolution and secession up to including the question of the potential of media and music to act in processes of democratization. What they have in common is a call for a better understanding of democracy, for practicing democracy, and thus for eventually developing cultures of democracy. This book is the result of those deliberations. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Gondar University are convinced that this research on cultures of democracy depicts an enriching and unique perspective on democratization in Ethiopia.

